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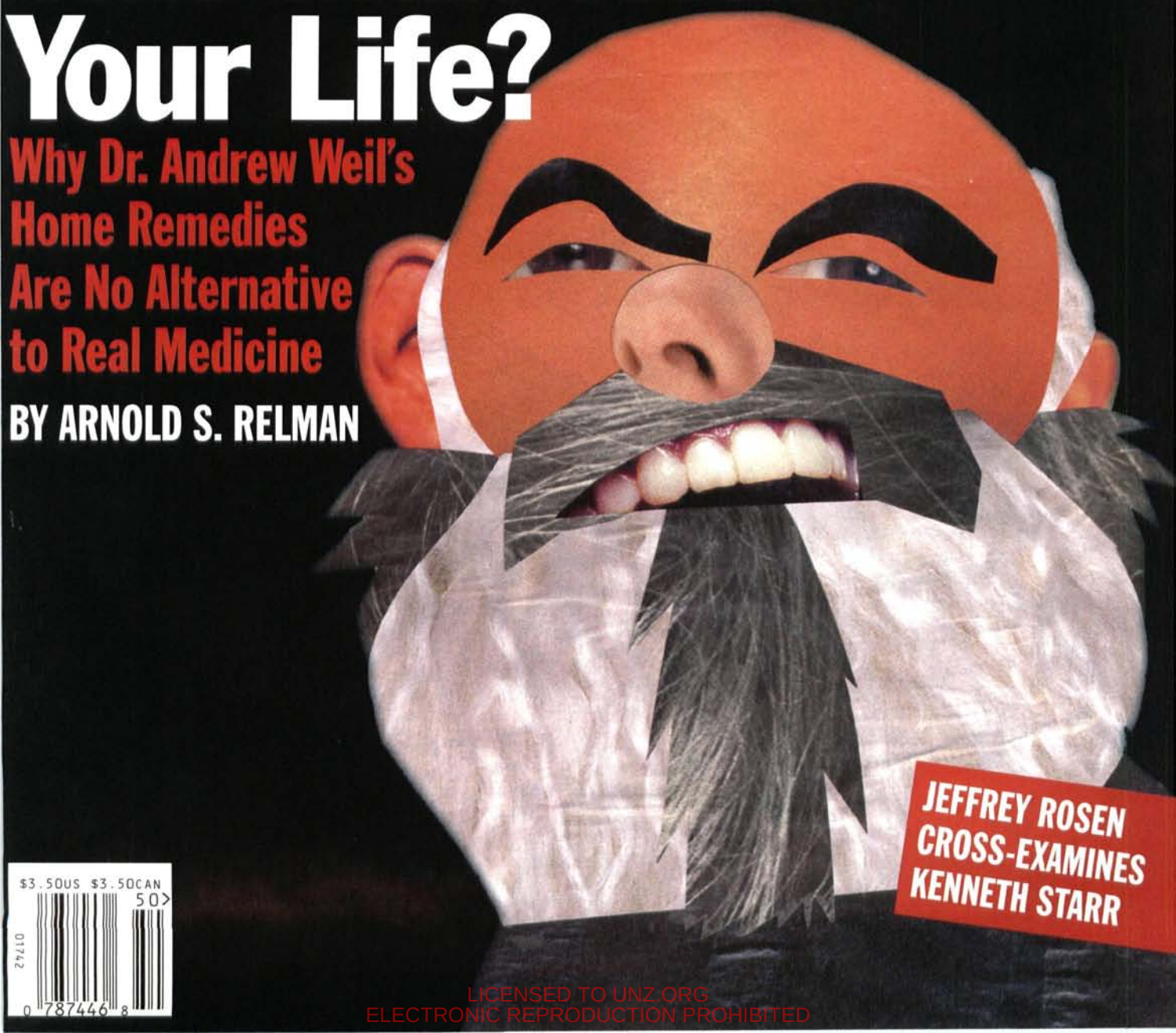
BY ARNOLD S. RELMAN



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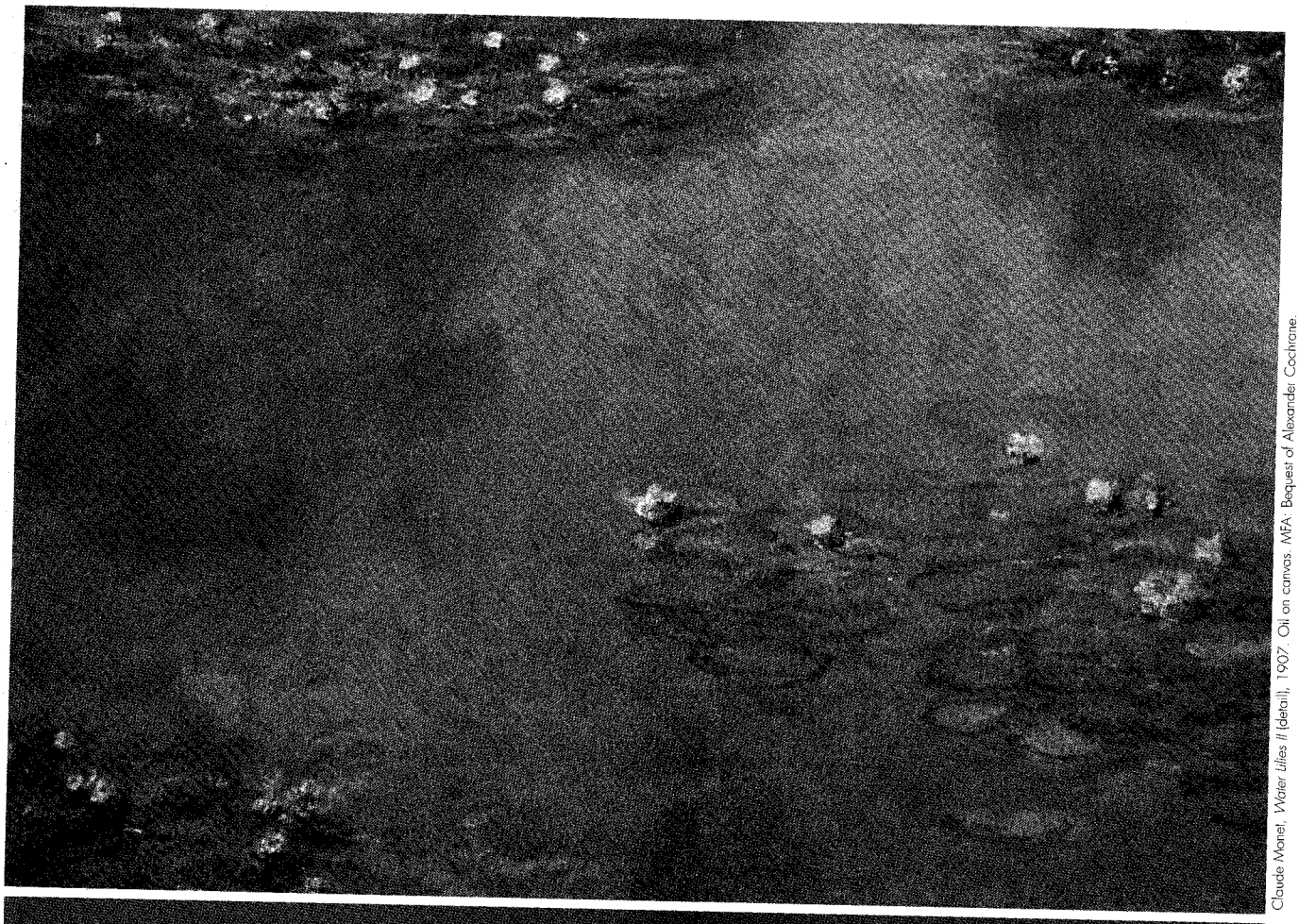

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DECEMBER 14, 1998

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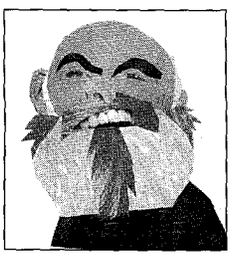

Cover by Jonathan Houston for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Illustration by Stephen Kroninger. Article on page 28.

4 **CORRESPONDENCE** The merits of queer theory, Rodrik vs. Bhagwati, &c.

6 **JONATHAN COHN** TRB: SNUFF FILM If you think Dr. Kevorkian is a selfless crusader on a mission of mercy, then you don't know Jack.

7 **THE EDITORS** LATIN LESSON A federal appellate court picks apart affirmative action in a Boston high school. NOTEBOOK Iraqi foot-dragging, Barnicle's biography, &c.

9 **ROMESH RATNESAR** PERSIAN GULF DISPATCH: FALSE ALARMS When the president suddenly decided not to bomb Saddam, the men on board one Navy warship experienced a boatload of frustration.

10 **MASHA GESSEN** ST. PETERSBURG DISPATCH: PISTOL POLITICS The assassination of a democracy activist signals the end of Russia's idealistic era.

12 **YOCHAI BENKLER AND LAWRENCE LESSIG** NET GAINS As long as room on the radio spectrum is limited, FCC regulation of broadcasting will remain consistent with the First Amendment. But what if new technology changes all that?

15 **JEFFREY ROSEN** STARR CROSSED How well did the independent counsel really hold up under questioning?

18 **LEE SIEGEL** THE RED AND THE BLACK This year's exuberant celebration of Paul Robeson's one-hundredth birthday has lacked for just one thing: an honest treatment of his unquestioning commitment to communism.

22 **DANA MILBANK** SCHOOLYARD TUSSLE Would-be presidential contender John Kerry is picking a fight with the teachers' unions over tenure and charter schools. Is this just Campaign 2000 opportunism or the beginning of a split between the Democratic Party and one of its most loyal constituencies?

26 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: WASTED TALENT Peter Berg the director is let down by Peter Berg the writer in *Very Bad Things*; *Gods and Monsters* is lifted by Ian McKellen.

28 **ARNOLD S. RELMAN** A TRIP TO STONESVILLE Andrew Weil, the boom in alternative medicine, and the retreat from science.

37 **JAMES WOOD** THE FLYING TRAPEZIUS *A Man in Full* by Tom Wolfe

42 **ROY PORTER** THE UNTRUSTWORTHY *In Defense of History* by Richard J. Evans; *Tales from the German Underworld* by Richard J. Evans

44 **STEPHEN DUNN** POEM *Irresistible*

46 **MARGARET TALBOT** WASHINGTON DIARIST: SHOW PEOPLE

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CORRESPONDENCE

Queer science

To the editors:

Lee Siegel's troubles with queer studies stem largely from what he perceives as the discipline's indulgent excesses and its glaring omissions ("The Gay Science," November 9). He laments the reduction of life, sex, and literary criticism purely to matters of the body to the exclusion of love. But why must scholars continually look beyond the corporal for the metaphysically noble? Isn't it the physical act that gets so many "queers" in trouble with society and its laws in the first place? Moreover, since when did queer studies dispose entirely with questions of love?

DICK LANGSTON
St. Louis, Missouri

To the editors:

Lee Siegel's criticism of queer theory would be more properly directed at poststructuralism, with its infamous notion of ever-receding "truths" and its anti-foundationalism. These tendencies, Siegel thinks, ruin appreciation of literature and literary critique. But most of the theorists taken to task in his article, though members of literature departments, are not literary critics—at least not the kind we remember from the supposedly good old days of Brooks and Warren. They are philosophers, linguists, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and historians. Literature qua literature is not their central concern.

Why turn to Sedgwick for an analysis of Austen's wit? Why not turn to her for some clues as to what Austen's work might say about how we (have come to) think about sexuality? Siegel is asking perfectly good questions but addressing them to the wrong people.

DOUGLAS E. GREEN
Northfield, Minnesota

To the editors:

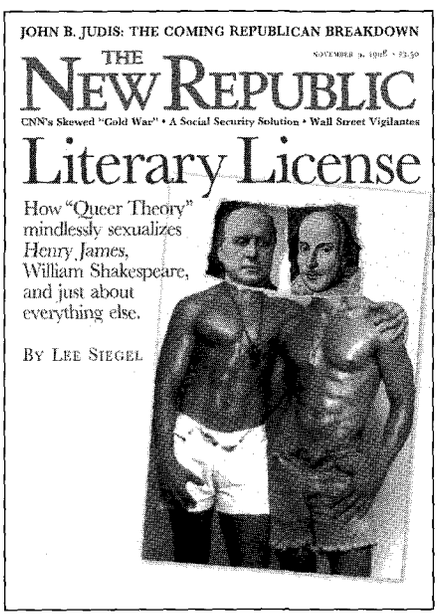
Never mind my numerous disagreements with Lee Siegel's assessment of the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Michael Moon. They pale in comparison to my outrage at his concluding attack on Moon (a colleague of mine). As regards his own life, Siegel assumes that his Ginsberg-inspired claim to be "putting my straight shoulder to the wheel" will be accepted without a murmur of protest. And why not? In the world that we may well live in soon (I certainly hope we will), to "out" oneself as heterosexual may have exactly the same meaning as outing oneself as gay. But—in an article filled with sneering innuendo and blatant misreadings—Siegel also speculates that "[Moon] faints at the slightest whiff of leather." In other words, no matter what one says, a proud-to-be-straight critic is always free to slap on some catchall label of deviance.

JOHN PLOTZ
Baltimore, Maryland

To the editors:

I find it perverse that Lee Siegel characterizes the field of queer theory as fixated on the anus. It is there, to be sure, but the field is to a much greater extent about the investments that characterize and form perception. I wonder if Siegel's myopia does not indicate compulsion and anxiety on his part.

MARK MASTERSON
South Pasadena, California


JOHN B. JUDIS: THE COMING REPUBLICAN BREAKDOWN
THE NEW REPUBLIC
CNN's Skewed "Cold War" • A Social Security Solution • Wall Street Vigilantes
Literary License
How "Queer Theory" mindlessly sexualizes Henry James, William Shakespeare, and just about everything else.
BY LEE SIEGEL

To the editors:

Lee Siegel's "The Gay Science" was a case of journalistic sensationalism at its worst. The author misrepresented queer theory in several cases—particularly in his attack on the work of Eve Sedgwick. Whether or not one agrees with Sedgwick's ideas, she has engendered and influenced volumes of scholarship that have encouraged literary scholars and students to read familiar texts in a new way, to think about the construction and restrictions of gender, and to reevaluate the role of power.

ARNOLD A. MARKLEY
Media, Pennsylvania

Fair representation

To the editors:

By making me a poster boy for postmodernism, Leon Wieseltier ("Shrunken," November 9) has contributed mightily to the amusement of colleagues familiar with my work, which, I dare say, is dedicated to a defense of liberal jurisprudence and has little to do with what Wieseltier calls the "wanton carnival of signifiers." Apparently Wieseltier believes that a professor who publishes in *Representations* and uses obscure, jargony words such as "icon" must genuflect before the altar of Derrida and Baudrillard. I think a fair-minded reader of "The Shrunken Head of Buchenwald" will conclude that I do not.

Ironically, Wieseltier succeeds at mischaracterizing my work by using the very strategies of engagement that he identifies with the evils of cultural studies. He ignores my central argument and instead shrinks my essay to a single footnote, which he quotes out of context. Wieseltier's claims to the contrary, it seems that postmodernists are not alone in eschewing reasoned argument for partisan caricature.

LAWRENCE DOUGLAS
Amherst College
Amherst, Massachusetts

To the editors:

It is surprising that Leon Wieseltier would condemn me for having mentioned that I am a child of Holocaust survivors in my recent letter to the editor.

I mentioned that only because it was relevant to the topic of my letter—the troubling decision by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to choose as its research director John Roth, who had compared Israel to the Nazis and Palestinian Arabs to the Jews of Nazi Germany. The fact that I was born in a displaced persons camp in Neu-Ulm, Germany, to parents who had survived Auschwitz and lost most of their family members makes it easier for readers to understand why I felt especially compelled to lead a campaign against the Roth nomination. Roth's incomprehensible comparisons show he had no real grasp of what my parents and family endured during the Nazi era. My personal life was scarred by the fact that I grew up without grandparents and most of my aunts, uncles, and cousins because they were murdered by the Nazis, and my parents never fully recovered from the horrors they endured. Their pain, anguish, and loss became our pain, anguish, and loss.

MORTON A. KLEIN
New York, New York

Peace later

To the editors:

Your recent Notebook item about Americans for Peace Now is off-base in several

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respects (November 9). Peace Now is hardly "marginal" in terms of Israeli politics. The movement consistently generates large-scale public demonstrations in support of the peace process, serves as a reliable source of cutting-edge information about political developments in Jerusalem and the settlements, and has one of the most dynamic youth movements in the country. One of the movement's founders—Tzaly Reshef—has recently served as chief of staff to Ehud Barak, leader of the mainstream Labor Party.

Peace Now and Americans for Peace Now are nonpartisan, single-issue movements, promoting peace in the Middle East, a key policy goal of the Clinton administration. Judging from the signatures of Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat on the Wye memorandum, peace is a goal of the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority, too.

Finally, Peace Now was founded 20 years ago, not by "Judy Collins" idealists but by hundreds of reserve officers and commanders of the Israeli Defense Forces who knew that peace is the best way to ensure Israeli security. The movement continues to draw broad support from the Israeli security establishment for the same reason.

EDWARD WITTEN
Princeton, New Jersey

Global fixes

To the editors:

Dani Rodrik's article prompts me to say: If you must fix what is broke, you need to know why it is broken ("The Global Fix," November 2). Rodrik's solution fails that test.

Rodrik believes that the "Reagan and Thatcher 'revolutions'" have made us opt for a let-the-markets-rip strategy without attention to social contexts. We have imperiled the international trade regime in two main ways: we have created "significant inequities, economic instability, or social disruption," and we have ridden roughshod over the diversity of other cultures by indulging demands to harmonize away such differences in the ideological pursuit of free trade. But neither charge is compelling.

First, Rodrik mistakenly transfers to *trade* the serious consequences of *financial* crises such as today's (which have come in any event from an *economic* miscalculation of the risks of freed capital flows, not from a disregard of the *social* context in which these flows were set). Free trade and free capital mobility are distinct phenomena and prescriptions. And misgivings about the malign consequences of trade are a throwback to the fears that plagued the developing countries before they abandoned them.

Second, the harmonization demands afflicting us today owe little to the idea or ideology of mindless free trade. In fact, just the opposite is true.

Competition has intensified as the world economy has gotten more integrated. Firms have clamored therefore to iron out any "unfair" advantages that their rivals may enjoy from differences in their nations' domestic policies and institutions. But these are lobbying demands that reflect protectionism rather than ideological demands for free trade. Freetraders have spent years unmasking them, whereas politicians have embraced them under the slogan "fair trade, not free trade."

But harmonization demands also come from socially motivated groups seeking to use trade policy to prompt social change abroad. However, because trade is driven by economic gain, the chosen social agendas reflect our competitiveness concerns and are consequently distorted and discounted. And the freeing of trade is undermined, as with Clinton's failure on fast-track renewal, because its supporters divide on the social agendas.

The global fix we need requires, then, not that we abandon social agendas, as in Rodrik's blueprint, but that we shift them to other nontrade arenas and pursue them simultaneously with the commitment that we bestow on freeing trade.

JAGDISH BHAGWATI
New York, New York

Dani Rodrik replies:

Jagdish Bhagwati and I agree that it is generally inappropriate for the United States to push a social agenda on trade partners. We disagree on what to do when trade has consequences for *domestic* social arrangements.

Consider the effect of trade on labor-market institutions. How should we respond when firms bargain down working conditions at home by threatening to outsource from a country with nonexistent labor rights? If I understand him correctly, Bhagwati would sacrifice domestic labor standards. I would sacrifice free trade.

I argued that the world economic system is facing a legitimacy crisis because the social and political institutions that underpin a market economy at the national level are missing globally. Building such institutions requires a degree of harmonization of national practices that Bhagwati and I both regard as undesirable. The alternative is to allow

continued on page 45

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FROM WASHINGTON

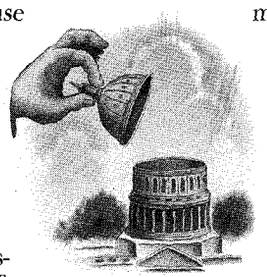
Snuff film

CBS had more than 15 million reasons to broadcast footage of Dr. Jack Kevorkian's latest "assisted suicide" on the November 22 edition of "60 Minutes." That's how many viewers tuned in to see Kevorkian administer three lethal injections to Thomas Youk, a 52-year-old man with Lou Gehrig's disease, and then monitor a cardiogram as Youk slipped into death. Mike Wallace hosted the breathlessly promoted segment, and it boosted "60 Minutes" to a 15.7 ratings share—its highest of the fall season.

CBS has naturally insisted that ratings had nothing to do with its broadcast decision. "It is a hallmark of '60 Minutes' to explore complex and often controversial issues in a fair and responsible way," CBS said in a press release. "CBS News believes this program performed a public service." And while it's hard to overlook the show's convenient timing—during the November ratings period—the program did in fact provide one public service: it confirmed that Kevorkian is a public menace, whose very prominence precludes the kind of nuanced debate about euthanasia that he, and CBS, claim to be promoting.

That Kevorkian committed a crime seems beyond dispute. Under the new Michigan law on assisted suicide, which went into effect September 1, planning, participating in, or providing the means for a suicide is a felony, punishable by up to five years in jail. On "60 Minutes," Kevorkian clearly helped Youk, rendered nearly paralyzed by his disease, to plan his own death. Kevorkian clearly provided the means by delivering his patented death machine to Youk's home. And for the first time (that we know about) Kevorkian clearly participated in the killing. After an autopsy, the medical examiner declared Youk's death a homicide. And, although Kevorkian's lawyer insists that the prosecutor could simply use his discretion and decide not to press the case, the prosecutor, David Gorcyca of Oakland County, Michigan, has indicated he will likely pursue Kevorkian once he's seen the unedited videotape. As we went to press, he was still waiting to get a copy from CBS.

Kevorkian says he *wants* to stand trial for the fifth time. (He escaped conviction the first four times, but this is the first time he's acknowledged actually administering the injections.) "The issue has got to be raised to the level where it is finally decided," he told Mike Wallace. Kevorkian has long promoted himself as a crusader for individual rights in the midst of a backward society that consigns its most helpless and infirm to lives of misery; with this latest episode, Kevorkian believes, he can finally force the issue.



But it is precisely because euthanasia is such a vexing and important moral question that Michigan should prosecute Kevorkian and put him in jail. The most compelling arguments against making assisted suicide and euthanasia legal are not the ones that question whether an individual facing an imminent, painful death has a right to end his or her own life. The best arguments are those that question how laws permitting euthanasia and assisted suicide might be abused. In an era of medical cost-cutting, will doctors, insurers, and even cash-strapped family members pressure the sick to end their lives? Will not only the terminally ill but also the depressed and handicapped "opt" for death because they feel worthless—and will society implicitly encourage that decision?

Given that U.S. physicians quietly, but routinely, assist terminally ill patients to die already, these predictions might seem apocalyptic. But research in the Netherlands—where assisted suicide is legal—suggests otherwise. According to Dr. Herbert Hendin, an opponent of physician-assisted suicide who has testified before Congress, one Dutch government study unearthed 5,000 cases in which doctors attempted to end the lives of competent patients without seeking their permission. Hendin found that many Dutch patients choose assisted suicide only with great ambivalence, and that people who suffer sudden declines in health frequently experience depression that might lead them to contemplate suicide, even though they may survive and later come to terms with their conditions. Hendin also concluded that, relative to the United States, the Netherlands seems less concerned with improving palliative care for the terminally ill. "Discussion of care for the terminally ill is dominated by how and when to extend assisted suicide and euthanasia to increasing groups of patients," he wrote.

Hendin predicts that "euthanasia will become a way for all of us to ignore the genuine needs of terminally ill people." It's not clear whether he's right—there are many strong arguments in favor of assisted suicide, too. What is clear is that Kevorkian all but makes Hendin's case for him. As Michael Betzold argued in his book *Appointment with Doctor Death*, and in a subsequent article for TNR (see "The Selling of Dr. Death," May 26, 1997), Kevorkian's history includes cases in which patients showed ambivalence about ending their lives and cases in which autopsies found the "patients" had no organic disease. What's more, Kevorkian is not some kindly "Chicago Hope" doctor who quietly gives an extra, and lethal, dose of painkiller after treating a patient for months; he is, instead, a pathologist with a suspended license who parachutes in on request and has no history of extended contact with his "patients." What he does have is a stake in seeing death happen—something the "60 Minutes" segment made abundantly clear.

Most troubling of all, as Betzold has recounted, Kevorkian has spoken and written openly about creating precisely the kind of slippery slope that critics fear. Kevorkian has written that assisted suicide is not only for patients with "the end stage of incurable disease, crippling deformity, or severe trauma," but also for those with "intense anxiety or psychic torture inflicted by self or others," those "who decide that they must die because of" their "religious or philosophical tenets or inflexible personal convictions." Who gets to make such decisions when the subjects are "fetuses, infants, minor children, and every human being incapable of giving direct or informed consent"? "That's up to physicians," Kevorkian told *Time* magazine, "and nobody can gainsay what doctors say." (Kevorkian's espousal of these views did not make "60 Minutes." Funny that.)

Kevorkian, who has now admitted to playing a part in more than 130 assisted suicides, would relish prosecution—and surely the attendant publicity as well. If convicted, he's vowed to stage a hunger strike in jail. That could kill the aging doctor—something a society with less respect for human life might consider a "mercy killing." Luckily, such a society does not exist here, notwithstanding Jack Kevorkian's best efforts to create one.

JONATHAN COHN

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 14, 1998

LATIN LESSON

In 1978, a deeply divided Supreme Court wrestled with the case of Allan Bakke, a white applicant who had been denied admission to medical school in California because of a state university's policy of reserving a fixed number of spots in each entering class for minority students. Writing for the court, Justice Lewis Powell articulated what was to become known as the "diversity rationale" for affirmative action in higher education. Namely, racial quotas were constitutionally impermissible, but the use of race as one among many factors in admissions, for the purposes of promoting a "diverse student body," was permissible. During the past 20 years, parents, students, colleges, universities, and, of course, the courts have wrestled with the meaning of this complex—not to say contradictory—holding.

How interesting that, at a moment in our history when the American political elite has come to enshrine "diversity" as a public policy desideratum—albeit a poorly defined one—the American electorate and the American courts are adopting an increasingly questioning posture toward Justice Powell's notion. In the last election, voters in Washington State adopted a sweeping anti-affirmative-action ballot proposition; a similar referendum has also passed in California. As for the law, the Supreme Court's recent decisions have taken an increasingly skeptical view of affirmative action generally; the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in the 1996 *Hopwood* case that the race-conscious admissions program at the University of Texas was unconstitutional and that the diversity rationale as laid out in *Bakke* is dead. And now the First Circuit has held that the race-conscious admissions plan at Boston Latin High School also must fall.

Boston Latin is one of the city's three selective public high schools that grant admission only to students who score highly on an entrance exam. It is part of a public school system that was long under federal court supervision to ensure desegregation. But there was no court order hanging over the school when it decided, in 1987, to maintain a 35 percent quota for minority admissions. A federal court struck down that rigid rule in 1995. Boston Latin, still pursuing diversity, devised an alternative plan that reserved half of the slots in each class for top-scoring students, then distributed the rest of the places according to a complex formula that guaranteed more black and Hispanic admissions than if scores alone were used, the point being to keep each class as close to 35 percent black and Hispanic as possible. When Sarah Wessmann, who is white, applied to Boston Latin, she found that minority students who had scored lower on the entrance exam than she did had been admitted, while she was excluded. So she went to court.

The First Circuit's ruling on her appeal pushes the inherent tensions in the diversity rationale to their breaking point. Subtler than their more ideological counterparts in the Fifth Circuit, the First Circuit judges did not go so far as to launch a frontal attack on *Bakke*. Rather, they assumed for the sake of argument that diversity could, indeed, be a "compelling governmental interest" in the educational context. Then they went on to pick the Boston Latin program apart—by scrupulously applying the Supreme Court's holdings in the 1989 *Croson* case, which held that any affirmative action program must be subjected to "searching judicial inquiry" to determine if it is "narrowly tailored" to meet a compelling governmental interest.

Under this level of scrutiny, the Boston Latin program crumbled. Why, the court asked, would an interest in promoting intellectual diversity among the Boston Latin student body require artificially boosting the school's minority admissions, when a test-scores-only policy would have resulted in a class that was a hardly insignificant 18 percent black and Hispanic? The Boston School Committee claimed that, well, a certain critical mass of minority students was necessary for *any* minorities to feel comfortable enough to add their voices to the intellectual mix Boston Latin sought. The court recognized this for the desperate argument that it is.

It also rejected the claim that the Boston Latin plan was necessary to remedy the consistent gap between white and minority test scores. The gap, the school committee argued, was a product of past discrimination—namely, years of accumulated lower expectations for minorities on the part of Boston's public elementary school teachers. How could that argument be valid, the court noted, when so many of Boston Latin's black and Hispanic applicants were the products of private and parochial schools?

In short, the First Circuit has shown just how flimsy the 20-year-old structure of *Bakke* has become. Of course we, and everyone else, want schools and universities that are as intellectually interesting and diverse as they can possibly be. The case for using affirmative action to achieve diversity is, indeed, stronger in the educational context than it would be, say, in government contracting. But

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even then it offers no easy way around such tough questions of fairness as why a middle-class black youngster should receive a place in an elite school while a poorer white student is left out. Nor have advocates of the diversity rationale ever quite explained why an individual's race is a valid proxy for his or her views on any matter of intellectual or educational relevance. They may manage to do that some day, but, thanks to the First Circuit's penetrating ruling, their task has, appropriately, been made more challenging. •

NOTEBOOK

UNSCOM WATCH, VIII: "The requests of [UNSCOM] are impossible to satisfy... there are no biological weapons on Iraq's territory ... engineer Muqdam has disposed of his personal diary ... these items were unilaterally destroyed.... Regrettably that particular diary could not be found." These are just a few of the inventive excuses of Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz in a letter to the U.N. Security Council explaining Iraq's inability to produce the weapons-related documents demanded by UNSCOM chief Richard Butler. Mind you, at least one of the papers Aziz is referring to, a suspicious Iraqi Air Force file relating to Iraq's chemical weapons stockpiles during the Iran-Iraq war, was literally snatched from the hands of an inspector earlier this year. And so, almost before the UNSCOM team had checked back into its Baghdad quarters, there was ample proof that Iraq's latest promise of "full cooperation"—issued to dissuade the United States from launching air strikes—is as empty as all the others. Almost as swiftly, anonymous Clinton administration officials spread the word that the United States was not prepared to strike Iraq at the first sign of noncooperation—as had been previously suggested when President Clinton decided to hold his fire on November 15. Instead, the administration will "let this process work through for some time," a senior administration official told *The New York Times*. This is laughable. We understand the administration's logic: by showing military restraint, the United States isolates Iraq diplomatically and reaps support for its position from Security Council appeasers such as Russia and France, as well as from Arab states. But what's the use of all this political capital if we never intend to spend it? Perhaps, though, there is some hope to be gleaned from other developments. In England, 16 normally divided Iraqi factions have met to discuss working together to usher in a post-Saddam era. And optimists might see the seeds of revolt in the attempted assassination of Izzat Ibrahim, Saddam's deputy on the Revolutionary Command Council and the deputy commander of the armed forces, or in the paranoia suggested by Saddam's decision to make sweeping changes in Iraq's diplomatic corps. But, for the moment, the question is what to do about Iraq's insistence that the records UNSCOM seeks don't exist. Some of the records are engineers' diaries about work on Iraq's weapons programs. In one especially ridiculous case, Aziz explained away the importance of one such diary this way: "The diary does not contain any clear information.... Brigadier Ismael used symbols instead of clear information, and he used self-invented codes symbolizing ... verbal orders.... Nobody can understand such notes clearly." And, besides, "the diary does not exist and has been destroyed." The whole exercise is pointless, as Aziz made clear in response to yet another document request: "One is left to wonder as to why UNSCOM keeps repeating the same request for the reply which has been given repeatedly, namely that the document requested is lost." We agree, but for rather different reasons.

MIXED SIGNALS:

Baghdad receives another warning

Cohen demands secret documents

—*The Washington Times*, November 24.

Iraq Document Dispute by Itself Won't Lead to Airstrikes

—*The Washington Post*, same day.

THE BARNICLE FILES, CONTINUED: Readers may recall TNR's portrayal of *Boston Globe* columnist Mike Barnicle not long ago (see "Hanging Barnicle," by Dan Kennedy, September 7). At the time, a controversy was swirling around Barnicle's alleged history of making up stories and other journalistic misdeeds—and whether the self-appointed tribune of Boston's white working class was being unfairly singled out because the *Globe* had forced out a black writer who had been caught fabricating some columns of her own. Our writer, Dan Kennedy of *The Boston Phoenix*, concluded that Barnicle was indeed guilty and that he deserved to be kicked off the paper's staff, which he was. Now it turns out that Kennedy's article itself was a bit too credulous about Barnicle. In ticking off Barnicle's pre-*Globe* resumé, Kennedy reported that Barnicle had "helped write" the Academy Award-winning screenplay for Robert Redford's 1972 movie *The Candidate*. Kennedy mentioned this because Barnicle had been going around implying it for years, and many other reporters had repeated the claim as fact. But it seems that Barnicle wasn't even being straight about *that*. Jeremy Larner is the screenplay's sole author. Just ask the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which lists him as the sole recipient of the Oscar for the picture's script. And after all these years he's gotten a little sick of seeing Barnicle—

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who hung out on the set and had a cameo in the film—get credit for the award-winning work. "We all liked him during the few days he was around," Larner told us in a letter, "but he made no pretense at the time of being a screenwriter ... or a fiction writer, either." When Sean Flynn of *Boston* magazine caught up with Barnicle after his journalistic defrocking, Barnicle conceded that, yes, he hadn't *exactly* helped write the screenplay after all—he'd just "contributed scenes." Of course, Larner says that's not true, either. "I wrote every word of that script," Larner told Flynn, adding, "I feel sick that Mike would think he contributed scenes.... It's pathetic." •

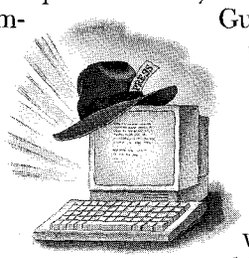
PERSIAN GULF DISPATCH

FALSE ALARMS

By Romesh Ratnesar

ABOARD THE USS CAPE ST. GEORGE

When the order not to shoot reached him, 37-year-old Ruben Serrato was hunched over his computer console, running over the details of the operation in his head, triple-checking to make sure he had not let anything slip. He had been up since three o'clock in the morning and had not seen the sun all day. Shortly after five that evening, he was to push a small, rectangular "Execute" button on his computer; it would open hatches on both ends of the *USS Cape St. George* and send close to 70 Tomahawk missiles screaming toward targets in Iraq. Just 20 minutes before the strike was to begin, word arrived in the ship's combat room that President Clinton had ordered U.S. forces to stand down. "It was kind of confusing," Serrato, a petty officer, said later. "We had been so focused on the job the whole day, and then they stopped us. I didn't know how to feel." When Serrato finally stepped out onto the deck of the ship to "decompress" and have a smoke, the enormity of what he had been about to do hit him all at once. "You know what?" he said, trying to light his cigarette in the balmy, open-sea darkness. "I'm starting to shake." He was surprised at himself.



The latest crisis with Iraq had that kind of bewildering rhythm for the 400 men aboard the *Cape St. George*. The ship had spent close to three months—longer than any of the other ships currently stationed here—trawling the Persian Gulf off the Arabian coast; for most of that time, the crew fended off boredom by conducting missile-strike simulations, tending to loose screws and chipping paint, and counting the days until the cruiser's deployment ends in December. Then the planned offensive against Iraq brought a momentary surge of adrenaline, but its cancellation, literally minutes before the strike was to begin, and the untidy and unsatisfying resolution of it all the next day, left a strange, bitter aftertaste. "He got us. Saddam got us," concluded Mike Celec, a 39-year-old combat-helicopter pilot from Mayport, Florida, as he tucked into dinner in the officers' ward room and listened to Clinton announce an end to the showdown. "His country stood up to the entire world again. And now we're right back to where we were." A half-dozen other officers nodded somberly and looked down, sharing his resignation.

Just a day earlier, the mood on the ship had been brimming with anticipation. When our small group arrived after a two-hour helicopter trip from Bahrain, we were greeted by our contact, Lieutenant Junior Grade Gene Rhie, a 24-year-old from Philadelphia. Rhie was so pumped that he promptly told us that an attack would take place that night; an hour later, as we ate lunch, he came by to say sheepishly that he wasn't supposed to have told us anything. Some crew members tried to go about their usual tasks, but the rest seemed to be just passing time, smoking cigarettes and hanging out at the bow of the ship, until the evening's promised fire show. Lieutenant Commander Dave Borah, the cruiser's ruddy-faced chief engineer, spent most of the day helping us select the best place for the cameramen to shoot the missiles taking off. "You know," he shrugged, standing on the deck that afternoon, "we've been out here so long that most of us would like to get whatever the hell happens over with." He paused and lowered his voice. "But, yeah, of course everybody's real excited. Shit—this is as close to fighting a war as most of these guys are going to get."

But that only partly explains the disappointment that many of them felt when, as the day turned to dusk in the Gulf, the strike was called off. In the age of high-tech, no-mess warfare, missile cruisers like the *Cape St. George* are indispensable fighting machines for the U.S. military. They have made combat a distant, impersonal affair, in which the enemy is never seen and computers decide where the bombs will land. "There won't be any more Normandys," one officer told me (or any skirmishes like the battle of Cape St. George, the World War II naval gun battle after which the ship was named). That's a salutary development, to be sure, but, when the United States decided *against punishing Iraq this month*, you could excuse the men on the cruiser for feeling cheated. They weren't just denied the bellicose thrill of watching their Tomahawks unleashed; they also missed their opportunity to feel productive, to see that they are actually doing something by sitting out in the middle of the Gulf. After the attack was nixed, I interviewed a group of enlisted men milling about at the front of the ship. It was the thirty-sixth birthday of Richard Meeher, a gunner's mate from Portsmouth, Ohio. "I thought I'd have a real nice birthday. It didn't happen," he said. I suggested that perhaps things had turned out for the best—that the awesome threat of the cruiser's power had made a potentially deadly assault unnecessary. "I agree somewhat—we've

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never had to shoot in anger. We're a deterrent just being here," he replied. "But I'd just like to see if everything works like it's supposed to. You've got to smack Saddam around a little bit, and this ship's capable of doing it. I'd like to see what that would do."

By the next night—after Iraq had agreed to allow the U.N.'s weapons inspectors back in and the United States had agreed to stand down—it was even harder to find anyone aboard the cruiser willing to proclaim victory. "Once again Saddam Hussein has got himself out of a situation," Borah sighed, shortly after the president's news conference ended. "I guarantee you that in less than a year we'll be back here again." Christian Cook, a 27-year-old lieutenant junior grade, said he is now sure that this tour of duty won't be his last assignment in the Gulf: "Someday [Saddam's] going to have the capability of delivering the truly dangerous stuff, and then we'll be in this same position again. Only we won't be just preparing for an air strike. Next time it's going to be a war."

To be on a missile cruiser during this go-around was to witness Clinton's adaptation of the vaunted "Powell Doctrine"—which has dominated American strategy since the Gulf war and dictates that the use of force should be fast, overwhelming, and rarely undertaken—in all its impressive prudence and maddening contradictions. In the short run, the mere massing of American power in the Gulf appeared to accomplish the administration's policy goals, and it didn't cost a single American or Iraqi life. But Saddam has already resumed his obstructionist tactics. And constantly deferring the actual use of our military might because it isn't unambiguously necessary at the time may make things a lot messier when it is needed. While Washington may choose to avoid contemplating such an endgame, it gnaws at the men on the *Cape St. George*. Jeff Playter, a slender 22-year-old petty officer, initially professed some unease to me about the likelihood of innocent Iraqis dying if the *Cape St. George* launched its missiles. But the next day he said that "now I think that by not firing we just fell into his trap. We've just given him more time to build up. And then it might be our innocent people who come under risk."

The long view, though, is on the losing end right now. Faraway threats to the national interest can only rouse the Republic for a weekend. Even among the *Cape St. George*'s young enlisted men, attentions started to shift to more immediate matters once the crisis passed. Shortly before I left the ship, 21-year-old Noel Ruiz corralled me to interview him. He is from the Bronx, and he joined the Navy four years ago to find a better, more promising life. He told me that he was both disappointed and relieved the attack had been averted. A protracted conflict would have extended the ship's stay in the Gulf, and Ruiz has a particularly urgent desire to make it back to the States on schedule. His wife gave birth to their first child three days earlier, half a world away. "I'd like to get home," he said, eyes twinkling, "to see my baby."

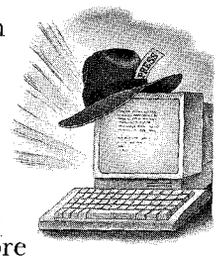
ROMESH RATNESAR is a writer-reporter for *Time* magazine.

ST. PETERSBURG DISPATCH

PISTOL POLITICS

By Masha Gessen

St. Petersburg is a city of five million people having a single conversation. I catch snippets of it all over town: "Eighty contract killings in the city!" says a man in his forties who brushes past me on the sidewalk. "Time to clean up the country," says a security guard in a hotel across town. "To think she had no bodyguards!" says an older woman in a pancake fur hat standing in front of the building where parliament member Galina Starovoitova was shot on November 20. A couple of dozen interchangeable characters form a clucking cluster of human helplessness there day and night. Russia's second-largest city feels like a dysfunctional family that has lost a parent.



The first time I saw Starovoitova, in March 1991, I couldn't see her at all: she was speaking at a rally of half a million people, a heaving mass that filled Moscow with pro-democracy slogans. The next time I saw anywhere near that many people in one place was at her funeral on November 24: for more than three hours, thousands of people waited in below-freezing temperatures to say goodbye. Speaking with me a couple of years ago, Starovoitova marveled at her 1991 self: "I could step forward firmly, with certainty, and lead large groups of people, speak at rallies of half a million. Often there were tanks in the streets, whether in Yerevan or Moscow or Petersburg, and I felt no fear. Now, in hindsight, I realize how little it would have taken to stage some sort of provocation at that time, to have one of us shot." But, at the dawn of Russian democracy, that seemed an impossibility. Now it is part of a pattern. Starovoitova was the sixth member of parliament killed since the first election in 1993, and hers was the fifth assassination attempt in St. Petersburg in seven weeks. So the sense of shock that permeates St. Petersburg today stems not from the fact of the assassination but from the understanding that her death marks the definitive end of an idealistic era in Russian politics and the commencement of a criminal age.

An anthropologist, Starovoitova rode into politics along with dozens of other intellectuals on the wave of late-'80s liberalism. She was elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in 1989, becoming a member of the Interregional Group of Deputies, the pro-democracy faction that included Boris Yeltsin and Andrei Sakharov. When Yeltsin was elected president, she became his

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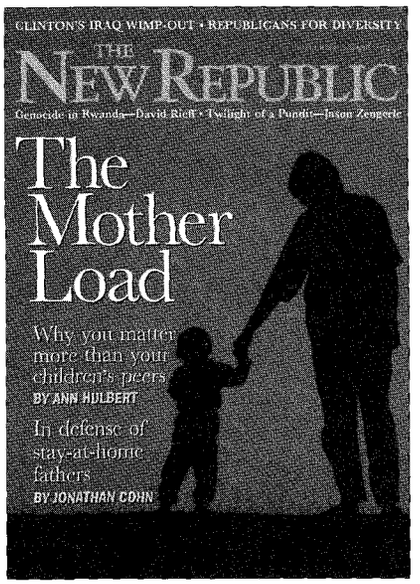
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adviser on interethnic issues—only to be sacked in 1992, when Yeltsin purged his government of the first generation of liberal-thinking intellectuals. Unlike most of them, she managed to secure a seat in parliament in the 1995 elections. This year—the tenth anniversary of new Russian liberalism—began with only two members of the roughly 300-strong Interregional Group, Yeltsin and Starovoitova, still occupying political positions of prominence. It ends with her dead and him apparently completely incapacitated. The rhetoric that propelled their rise has long been gone from politics, as technocrats have replaced ideologues at all levels of government.

Probably nowhere is this more apparent than in St. Petersburg—traditionally a bellwether of Russian politics, if only because its elections are generally held before the rest of the country's. Its current mayor, Vladimir Yakovlev, a politician unremarkable in every respect, rose through the ranks of city bureaucrats. In 1996, he unseated the city's first post-Soviet mayor, the liberal intellectual Anatoly Sobchak. Last year, Sobchak, under investigation for allegedly misappropriating funds and property while in office, fled Russia. He is now in Paris, where he grants occasional interviews to Russian journalists to reaffirm that he is not going home because he holds no hope of a fair trial.

This points to another important new feature of Russian politics: the pervasive corruption and concomitant fear. Starovoitova was assassinated two weeks before the scheduled elections for the St. Petersburg legislature. More than 500 candidates are running in 50 districts in a spectacular gangster-style campaign. About a month before the murder, Starovoitova's aide caught two people planting a bug in her office. In virtually every district, candidates who represent the liberal opposition to the mayor have doppelgänger opponents—mysterious persons with the same first and last names who also appear on the ballot. A few weeks ago, the opposition candidate in one district managed to get his double to admit that he'd been paid to register his candidacy; a few days later, the politician claims, assassination threats compelled him to help his former opponent flee the city.

There is even an entire fictitious political party. An organization calling itself the Yabloko-St. Petersburg, a name apparently intended to mislead potential supporters of Yabloko, the city's leading liberal organization, has put forward a slew of heretofore unknown candidates. And, every day, busloads of mostly older people are brought to polling places to fill out absentee ballots on the spot; on at least one occasion, one of the bused retirees told a TV reporter she thought she'd be taken on a guided tour of the city. A number of candidates complain that their staff members have been harassed and attacked. Two candidates are recuperating following assassination attempts.

One of them, a liberal named Oleg Sergeyev, is the current chairman of the St. Petersburg legislature's public health committee; it is commonly believed that he was targeted because of his role in enforcing the law on pharmaceutical reimbursements. The other, Viktor Novoselov, is an entrepreneur, so the attack on his life raised few eyebrows: murders of businessmen are commonplace. Prominent St. Petersburg politicians who have been murdered include the chief of privatization and an aide to the speaker of the lower house of the federal parliament.

Theories regarding who may have murdered Starovoitova abound. Members of the small liberal bloc she supported in the current election campaign blame the Communists, claiming that she was researching fund-raising violations in their ranks. Some observers believe she was killed because she planned to run for governor of the Leningrad region, a vast territory that includes several seaports, one of the country's largest oil refineries, and the border with Finland. Others think nationalist extremists are to blame: Starovoitova was vocal in a recent brouhaha over anti-Semitic comments made by a Communist member of parliament, calling on the rest of parliament to censure him. Still others suggest the murder was inspired by the federal government, which is seeking justification for instituting a state of emergency. Considering Russia's disastrous track record in solving contract murders, none of these, or any other theory, is likely to be proved. Still, all of them are conceivable.

Last spring, Starovoitova predicted that the election campaign for the St. Petersburg legislature "would end in gunfire." She did not specify who would fire the shots, because it could have been anyone: in this city and in this country people kill for money, for influence, for lack of another way to resolve a nagging conflict. It's just politics. "Everyone in this hall knows this, but no one is saying it," Sergei Mironov, the acting chairman of the St. Petersburg legislature, said at Starovoitova's memorial service. "She died in the criminal city of St. Petersburg."

MASHA GESSEN, author of *Dead Again: The Russian Intelligentsia After Communism*, is the chief of reporting at *Itogi*.

Will technology make CBS unconstitutional?

NET GAINS

By Yochai Benkler and Lawrence Lessig

Forty years after Nobel Prize-winning economist Ronald Coase suggested privatizing the radio spectrum, the FCC has caught on. Now there's a quiet frenzy raging in Washington. Every slice of spectrum, from cellular to satellite and, later this year, even commercial FM and analog TV, is being sold off to help fund the budget. (Everything, that is, except HDTV. Broadcasters got those channels for free.) Everyone seems to assume that this radio bake-off is constitutional. No doubt at one time it was. So said the Supreme Court—at least about licensing—in 1943. But is it con-

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stitutional anymore? Does the government have the right to auction off spectrum as if it were just another national resource?

We think the answer is probably no. Changes in technology are likely to render much of the allocation of spectrum constitutionally suspect, and it's time that the auctioneers—and the buyers—took note.

Our argument is straightforward: The FCC regulates speech. It says that, if you want to speak on 98.6 FM in Boston, you must get a license (or, now, buy one). If you speak on 98.6 without a license, you will have committed a crime. The FCC will prosecute you and seize your transmitter. All this despite the fact that the First Amendment to the Constitution says, "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech." What gives?

The traditional rationale goes something like this: 98.6 is part of the radio spectrum; radio spectrum by its "nature" must be allocated for it to be useable. Two transmitters can't use the same channel, so someone must decide who gets which. Since 1927, the FCC has had that authority. For many years, the FCC did this by licensing. During the 1990s, it has increasingly allocated spectrum through auctions. But, whether through licensing or auctioning, the government must, the argument goes, organize and police the parceling out of the spectrum commons. We have, it is said, no other choice. Thus has "allocated spectrum" been the dominant architecture for broadcasting. This architecture in turn has justified massive involvement by government in the distribution of speech sans wires. Nature makes it so, the government says, and government must respect nature.

But what if "nature" changed? What if it were no longer true that spectrum had to be allocated? What if the spectrum could be shared by all rather than set aside for a narrow class of licensees? What if the FCC, CBS, or Bell Atlantic Mobile became unnecessary?

A growing body of research suggests exactly this. Using a variety of strategies, mostly known as spread spectrum, researchers in wireless technology have begun to demonstrate the viability of systems that allow many users to share the same slice of spectrum without interfering with one another. Just as packet-switching is replacing circuit-switched telephony, spread-spectrum techniques, these researchers argue, could replace traditional broadcasting. And just as TCP/IP protocols tell packets on the Internet where to go, and how not to get mixed up or interfere with packets carrying other peoples' messages, spread-spectrum technologies could use one of a number of protocols to avoid collision and congestion in wireless communication.

The implications of this change are profound. Instead of defined frequency ranges over which someone—a licensee or an owner—gets to decide who communicates what, and to whom, the government would permit anyone using certain kinds of equipment (basically a computer with a wireless modem) to send and receive whatever he or she wants, over broad swaths of spectrum. Instead of a market in spectrum, we would have a market in efficient wireless modems. Instead of the government and a small group of companies dictating how wireless communications will be used, we would have every user deciding for her- or himself whether to use a computer to talk to a friend, watch a movie, or play an online game. In other words, instead of a few railroad companies deciding who gets to go where, and when, people would buy cars and go wherever they wanted to go.

If the engineers are right—if the efficiency of an architecture of spread-spectrum wireless technology were even roughly equivalent to the architecture of allocated spectrum—then much of the present broadcasting architecture would be rendered unconstitutional. If shared spectrum is possible, in other words, then the First Amendment would mean that allocated spectrum—whether licensed or auctioned—must go. And, if allocated spectrum must go, then so must the government's giveaways and sales to private industry. If we are right, the government can no more auction the right to broadcast in Boston than it can auction a license to print a newspaper there.

Why? The First Amendment protects the freedom of speech and the press; it is strongly opposed to a system of licensing or prior restraint. The "press" the Framers had in mind was not *The New York Times*; the press of 1791 was the printing machine and a jumble of small printers and pamphleteers—in short, the Internet of their day. Economics has gotten the better of this original pamphleteer press; concentration has replaced diversity. And it isn't clear that the Constitution can say much about the consequences of such economic rationalization.

But the Constitution does have something to say when the concentration comes from state-sponsored monopolies and state prohibitions on competing speech. When the state creates a regime where all speech must be licensed; when it establishes monopolies over valuable speech resources; when it erects a framework that concentrates, rather than decentralizes, opportunities for speech, then the state needs a very strong justification.

Necessity would be such a justification. If the only architecture for broadcasting that could work were the architecture of allocated spectrum, then spectrum allocation would be justified. But, when technology advances such that this concentrated architecture is no longer required, then "necessity" disappears. And, when the reason for this state-sponsored monopoly—abridging the freedom to speak without a license from the state—vanishes, then broadcasters need new reasons to justify their state-supported monopolies.

We are not convinced that such a justification couldn't be made. We're not in the business of closing off debate. But, before the government proceeds to auction (or to give away) even more spectrum to the few, shouldn't we at least pause to ask where we will be if the promise of spread-spectrum technologies comes true? If spectrum can be shared, does the Constitution really permit the state to silence the many so that CBS can speak?

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STARR CROSSED

By Jeffrey Rosen

"You have no right or authority under the law, as independent counsel, to advocate for a particular position on the evidence before the Judiciary Committee," Sam Dash wrote to Kenneth Starr last week, announcing his decision to resign as Starr's $400-an-hour ethics adviser. But Dash's frantic attempt to save his tattered reputation after Starr's appearance before the House was several months too late. The aptly named Dash raised no objection when Starr filed his aggressively polemical report to Congress in September, which argued that Clinton had committed not only crimes but potential high crimes. Indeed, based on Dash's expensive advice, Starr was persuaded to make portions of his report even more tendentious. Dash's shock and horror over the discovery that Starr had violated the letter and spirit of Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution, which says that the House "shall have the sole Power of impeachment," was an inspired touch of Claude Rains that struck a nicely comic note at the end of an otherwise trying week.

Nevertheless, the real legacy of Sam Dash is not his hypocritical attempt to distance himself from his embattled protégé but his authorship of the independent counsel law that created this constitutional aberration in the first place. Dash helped to draft Section 595(c) of the statute, the impeachment referral provision, which says that "an independent counsel shall advise the House of Representatives of any substantial and credible information ... that may constitute grounds for an impeachment." It's no coincidence, in light of this constitutionally troubling delegation of powers, which the Supreme Court didn't specifically consider when it upheld the statute in 1988, that Starr and his congressional interrogators seemed confused about the roles that they had been assigned to play. Starr grandiosely but revealingly suggested that he address the committee standing behind a podium, recalling his days as an advocate before the Supreme Court, and Democrats and Republicans sparred about whether to address him as "judge," "prosecutor," "counsel," or "witness." In fact, the statute invited Starr to juggle all four roles at once. He gathered evidence like a prosecutor, evaluated the credibility of testimony like a grand juror, applied facts to the law like a judge, and decided whether ordinary crimes might rise to the level of high crimes like a legislator.

On Thursday, Abbe Lowell, the chief counsel for the Democrats, attempted to contrast Starr's impeachment referral with the report submitted by Leon Jaworski, the Watergate special prosecutor, in 1974. But Lowell never quite explained the constitutional significance of the comparison: Jaworski had carefully framed his report to avoid the constitutional difficulties that Starr exacerbated. Only 55 pages long, Jaworski's report set forth the relevant evidence without any commentary, made no conclusions about whether the president had committed ordinary crimes or impeachable offenses, and contained a single piece of evidence on each page. Submitted under seal, where it remains today, and delivered in the name of the grand jury, it could plausibly be considered the equivalent of an ordinary grand jury presentment—a report of official misconduct—that the House was free to embrace or ignore as it saw fit.

Unlike Jaworski, Starr had to confront the constitutional dilemma posed by the independent counsel law, which *required* him to report information relevant to impeachment that he had discovered in the course of his own investigation. But Starr might have minimized the dilemma in two ways. First, he might have turned over the Linda Tripp tapes to Congress last January, as soon as he concluded that they contained "substantial and credible information that the president may have committed impeachable offenses." By interpreting 595(c) as authorization for him to give Congress raw "information," but not a narrative report of legal conclusions, Starr wouldn't have encroached on Congress's prerogatives any more than Linda Tripp would have if she had sent the tapes herself. Of course, if Congress had faced up to its responsibility to engage in public fact-finding, it would have never threatened Monica Lewinsky or set a perjury trap for Clinton, as the unelected prosecutor felt free to do.

Alternatively, Starr might have followed Jaworski's lead by asking his own grand jury to issue a presentment about the president's wrongdoing and transmitting it to Congress in the grand jury's name. But, aside from leaking the fact that several grand jurors had laughed at the president's testimony, Starr gave his Potemkin grand jury no formal role in the impeachment referral at all.

Having interpreted the independent counsel law in a way that made his own opinions and legal conclusions

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central to the impeachment debate, Starr can hardly complain when Democrats and Republicans pressed him to justify his conclusions. Elton Gallegly, a California Republican, asked Starr if he could give "a brief assessment" of the credibility and truthfulness of Lewinsky, Betty Currie, and Vernon Jordan. After saying he was reluctant to answer, "because of fundamental fairness concerns," Starr answered anyway: "With respect to Ms. Lewinsky, I think she desperately does not want to hurt the president." Never mind that Starr, who once said he couldn't give Lewinsky immunity without "looking [her] in the eye," turned out never to have met Lewinsky or attended any of her depositions. In fact, Starr's opinions about Lewinsky's credibility shouldn't carry any more weight with the House than those of her former attorney, whom Starr called, in a Dickensian touch, "the very loquacious Mr. Ginsburg." The Constitution assigns the role of assessing the credibility of impeachment evidence to the House alone.

Charles Schumer of New York accused Starr of fishing for salacious material to embarrass Clinton, and there is lingering anger among congressional Democrats about the degree to which he succeeded. Two days before Starr's testimony, in the most egregious privacy violation of the entire inquiry, the nation heard Monica Lewinsky, in her surreptitiously tape-recorded phone conversations with Linda Tripp, accuse the president of having a venereal disease. We also heard her express jealousy toward another White House staffer, Debbie Schiff, who she believed was the president's girlfriend. In one of her FBI interviews, which appears in Starr's appendices, Lewinsky suggested that Schiff might have given her name to Paula Jones's lawyers, so that Schiff wouldn't have to testify. Later, when Clinton gave Lewinsky the names of the other women on the witness list, Linda Tripp told the FBI that "this information comforted Lewinsky because Debbie Schiff was not on the list," and "Lewinsky figured the Paula Jones people could not know much if they left off Schiff, a longtime girlfriend of the President." (The last seven words are clearly visible under the half-hearted redaction.)

The decision by Henry Hyde, chair of the Judiciary Committee, to release the raw FBI reports and grand jury transcripts in Starr's appendices, as well as the Tripp tapes, was a gross violation of Schiff's privacy as well as Lewinsky's, a textbook example of an unreasonable intrusion under the Fourth Amendment. There was no evidence that Schiff was, in fact, involved with the president, despite the extraordinary but futile efforts of Starr's prosecutors to troll for rumors in their interrogations of the Secret Service. The grand jury transcripts that Hyde released show that, in response to questions by one of Starr's deputies, a Secret Service agent named Gary Byrne said that he saw Schiff put her hands over her lips and say "ssh" as she walked into the president's pantry. Later, Byrne noticed that "the president was sitting in a chair, and Debbie was standing behind him, like—like she was massaging his shoulders." As a result of this incident, Byrne said, he assumed that the president's steward was referring to the president and Schiff when he allegedly complained about having to clean up lipstick-stained tissues in the president's study.

But no one corroborated Byrne's testimony. When the prosecutors asked another agent, Brent Chinery, about rumors that the steward had found lipstick-stained tissues in the president's study, Chinery said that, to the best of his memory, the tissues were found after the president visited with Lewinsky, not Schiff. Finally, the prosecutors called the president's steward himself, who denied the rumors unequivocally. "Did you ever find lipstick-stained anything in the Oval Office, in the White House?" "No, sir." "Or anything that was stained red?" "No, sir."

Aside from a desire to embarrass the president, the only possible justification for these outrageous questions was an attempt to charge the president with perjury when he told Paula Jones's lawyers that he hadn't engaged in sexual relations with any federal employees while he was president of the United States. But the questions were as far removed from Starr's mandate to investigate obstruction of justice and perjury arising out of Monica Lewinsky's testimony as Starr's efforts to interrogate Clinton's alleged girlfriends in Arkansas were to his mandate to investigate Whitewater.

Many of the questions from congressional Democrats seemed designed to give Starr a taste of his own medicine, fishing for salacious information for the sole purpose of humiliating the independent counsel. Indeed, the entire impeachment hearing might be considered a perjury trap that the Democrats set for Starr, in which they asked him pointed questions about his legal but embarrassing activities and tried to corner him into telling minor lies under oath.

For example, the questions about Starr's contacts with Paula Jones's lawyers and when, precisely, he first learned that a tape recording might exist on which a woman claimed to have had sexual contact with President Clinton—all were designed to paint Starr into a corner. When Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren asked if he had learned about the tape recordings in November 1997, Starr responded very much as President Clinton did when he was surprised in his deposition by the oddly specific questions of Paula Jones's lawyers. "I am not recalling that," Starr said. "The specificity of your question suggests there may be information, and I'm happy to respond to information if that is . . . relevant."

Starr was similarly Clintonian in denying David Kendall's charge that his agents had attempted "to get Ms. Lewinsky to wear a recording device and surreptitiously record Mr. Jordan or the president." Starr insists that his prosecutors had discussed "consensual monitoring" at a "high level of generality," without specifically mentioning Jordan or the president. But Lewinsky told the grand jury under oath that Michael Emmick had asked her "to place calls or wear a wire to call Betty and Mr. Jordan and possibly the president." Like Clinton, Starr

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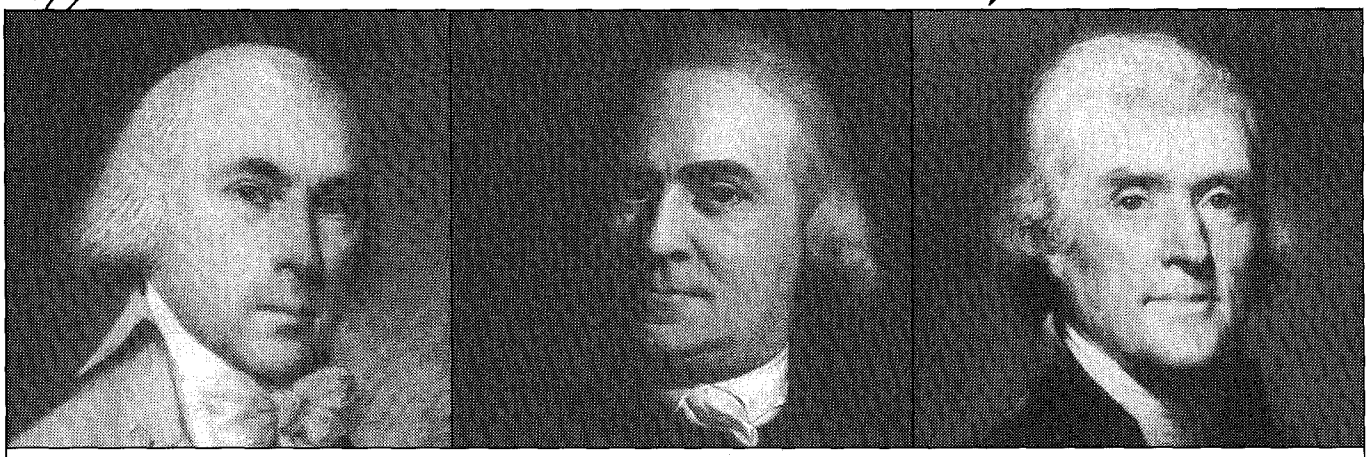

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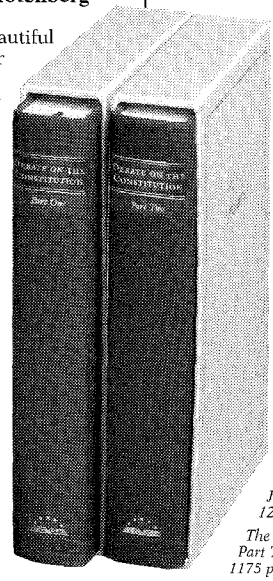

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was splitting hairs to avoid acknowledging legal but embarrassing conduct by his prosecutors. And, in so doing, he managed to suggest that his key witness had lied under oath.

As for the contacts with Paula Jones's lawyers, Democrats on the Judiciary Committee believe that Starr may have received a draft of Monica Lewinsky's affidavit from Paula Jones's lawyers, who, as Starr's appendices illustrate, had been sent a copy of it by Lewinsky's lawyer, Frank Carter, on January 12. "It seems to me that the only way he could have got it was the Jones lawyers," a Democratic staffer told me. "The only people who had it were Frank Carter and Paula Jones's lawyers and Monica, and when Starr confronted her, she didn't have it. That to me is a pretty good circumstantial case." Although Democrats didn't ask Starr directly where he got the affidavit, because they weren't certain of the answer, this committee staffer believes that Starr might not have told the truth when he said that Jones's attorneys "reached out to me with respect to the constitutional immunity issue solely, exclusively."

Finally, House Democrats insist that Starr himself interfered with their impeachment inquiry when he refused their request to turn over documents relating to the expansion of his jurisdiction. Lis Wiehl, the chief investigative counsel for the Democrats, told me: "We fought about that for weeks. I was constantly given answers for why that couldn't be given. They would say, 'We have to ask the Department of Justice,' and then the Department of Justice would say, 'No, they don't have to ask us.'... We think the interest of fairness demands you would be given this information in any civil litigation, let alone an impeachment investigation. Talk about obstruction of justice and abuse of power." It's ironic that the only constitutionally uncontroversial role that Starr could have assumed in the impeachment process—that of a nonpartisan investigator supplying factual information in response to requests from the House—was the role that he refused to play.

If the Lewinsky affair were an ordinary criminal case, of course, the attempt to distract attention from the facts by attacking the prosecutor would be a cheap example of Johnnie Cochranism. But ordinary prosecutors bring indictments rather than offer impeachment recommendations; and Starr's interpretation of his duties under the independent counsel statute has made his own conduct and motives central to the House's deliberations. The fact that the Judiciary Committee now feels compelled to vote on Starr's allegations, even though the country wants them and him to disappear, shows how profoundly the independent counsel law has distorted the complicated blend of legal and political judgment that the Constitution envisioned when it gave the House exclusive control over the impeachment process. Nevertheless, by passing the buck to Starr and then attacking him for performing duties that he should never have been asked to perform, Sam Dash and other Democratic supporters of the independent counsel law deserve as much blame as the independent counsel himself. •

The real meaning of Paul Robeson's centennial.

THE RED AND THE BLACK

By Lee Siegel

They muffled Paul Robeson's voice, distorted the most daring part of him, suppressed the values he cherished most. I'm not referring to the FBI, which kept tabs on Robeson beginning in the 1940s almost until his death in 1976. Nor am I alluding to the House Un-American Activities Committee, which summoned the singer, actor, champion of civil rights and organized labor, and committed defender of Soviet communism to testify before it in 1956. I'm speaking of institutions like the New York Historical Society and *The New York Times*, which, for the past year, have been celebrating the centenary of Robeson's birth. For them, the way Robeson clothed himself in communism defiantly and insanely, as if in a burning shirt, was either a bright, shining humanism or an embarrassing lapse in taste not worth mentioning.

Paul Robeson was an impassioned and courageous man, and a pompous, cowardly ass. His political commitment was total because his artistic gift was incomplete. He was a bane of white racism. He was complicit with evil. He inspired a great many black people, at times risking his life by standing in dangerous places alongside blacks or beside workers of whatever race. And he inspired from a glamorous and alienating emotional distance, dropping into rallies from his estate in Connecticut or from his long sojourn in lionizing Europe. He endorsed embattled causes. He stained the very same causes with his endorsement. If you neglect to

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tell Robeson's full story, you cover up the fullness of human existence, that myriad multivalence whose preservation is the ultimate rationale for the pursuit of public aims.

The New York Historical Society's Robeson exhibition has been traveling around the country. Viewing it, you would not know that, about a dozen years after a bitterly disillusioned Richard Wright left the party, Robeson was defending the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary. And you would not know the whole truth behind Robeson's visits to the Soviet Union during the '30s and late '40s.

On those trips, Robeson continued to extol the USSR's declared commitment to the rights of its ethnic minorities. He didn't much care that, as he well knew, some of those minorities had been systematically repressed; and the folk cultures Robeson genuinely loved, destroyed. He gave stirring concerts of Russian and Russian-Jewish folk songs, including a beautiful and affecting rendition—it has been recorded—of "Zog Nit Kaynmal," the Yiddish hymn of the Warsaw Ghetto resistance. But the show had no comment on Robeson's silence, upon his return, about the Communist murder of Jewish artists and intellectuals, among them several he had been close to.

Yet this was an atrocity that Robeson had been told about in Moscow by a Russian-Jewish friend. "I met Jewish people all over the place," he lied to reporters, who asked him, following his 1949 USSR visit, about Soviet anti-Semitism. "I heard no word about it." Robeson's Jewish accompanist, a left-wing, white South African named Bruno Raikin, in fact, had been refused a visa by the Soviets precisely because of his Jewishness. In response, Robeson "shrugged," writes his biographer, and got another accompanist without making any protest.

You would have searched through the exhibition in vain for a mention of Robeson's defense of the Nazi-Soviet pact. That was nearly the last of Moscow's many betrayals of American communism, the accumulation of which caused all but the die-hard faithful among black Communists to quit the party. (There were never that many to begin with.) There was nothing about Robeson's support for Stalin against Tito, even when nearly all American progressives of the time took Tito's side. And there was not a word about Robeson's vociferous calls, reflecting Moscow's line in 1949, for U.S. government abrogation of civil rights for Trotskyist members of the Socialist Workers Party. Even the Communist Party of the United States asked Robeson to tone down his declarations for fear that he would compromise his usefulness to them.

And then there is *The New York Times* on Robeson. Describing a play about him, performed this past summer for young audiences, the *Times* praised Robeson's "vision" without even hinting at how stunningly contradictory that vision was. "In the play," the brief article continues, "Robeson can see equality in Stalinist Russia without ignoring the naïveté of his assumptions." Such subtlety! It makes Chekhov look like Ivan the Terrible.

There's no reason why schoolchildren should be subjected to the truth about Paul Robeson before they are old enough to understand the circumstances that give it the value of truth. Surely, though, *Times* readers can handle a little moral tension. Yet a few months earlier, in the pages of Arts & Leisure—like its partner in comedy, Arts & Ideas, the section is a weekly banana peel dropped in the path of human intelligence—Martin Duberman described how Robeson was "hounded in his day by the guard dogs of civic orthodoxy." Again, there is no hint of Robeson's indifference to Soviet cruelty. It is odd. It is especially odd because everything I know about this indifference I learned from Duberman's own superb biography of Robeson, a slanted defense of its subject, which, nevertheless, scrupulously and honestly presents all the facts one needs to write a biography counter to Duberman's. I've quoted from it above. But the *Times*' correct maudlin attitudes will out.

Robeson stood up for and promoted the USSR until his dying day. He never, as far as anyone knows, uttered a word of criticism of Stalin or of Soviet policy, even privately. He was as unbending and defiant as a Greek hero, but he put his heroism in the service of a debased, repellent, and unheroic cause. Had he been a good Marxist, he would have been analytically astute enough to know when to fling off the bloody albatross of communism. But, unlike other black Communists and fellow travelers, who knew how to manipulate the Comintern's cynical agenda for their own people's ends—in Harlem during the Depression, or in the Scottsboro case—Robeson was politically juvenile.

Do you think I'm red-baiting Robeson? Shame on you. That would be anachronistic. The current inky combat over the reality of McCarthyism is little more than ersatz politics churning away in a political vacuum. Anyone who refuses to recognize that the irrational fury of McCarthyism took its justification from a genuine threat to national security—a threat posed by people who took their marching orders from a foreign power that applied itself to the destruction of its ideological enemies—is politically blind. And anyone who refuses to recognize that there were American Communists who were not spies but patriotic idealists, who did some good and no harm, is psychologically obtuse. In 1998, one should be able to hold both perspectives at the same time without requiring medication.

Something other than ideological belief is at stake in the representation of Robeson's life. It is Robeson's status as a moral agent who made some consequential choices and not other consequential choices. That is to say, between the one-dimensional exhibition and the elliptical *Times* articles, you lose, in the warp of defensive politics, the thread of life and the loom of history.

For Robeson's censoring admirers, his life was tragic. They like to identify him with Othello, the character he played on stage in London and New York in one of his most famous roles, the other role being Brutus Jones in O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*. In this scenario, the puny

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alcoholic Iago from Wisconsin drove the brave black warrior to smother his beloved cause underneath his tormented brain. And the finale finds Robeson's cause living on in the memory of its valiant defender. It is the kind of tale dear to Hollywood tin hearts—that Hollywood where Robeson vowed in 1942 never to work again, out of disgust with the movies' racist caricatures of blacks.

Such a tale is a one-sided truth. But there is a fuller truth, rooted in a more serious kind of tragedy. It has to do with the shape of character and the fatality of circumstance. Shakespeare's Othello was a man of rare talents, a passionate, intrepid spirit. But, unlike the popular, sentimental notion of Othello, he was also an insecure stranger in a foreign land. Out of his insecurity he created an inflated self and spoke in bombastic gusts of noble sentiment. He flexed his moral vanity by putting on display his trust in other people and his expectation of their devotion to him in return. If Othello had not been the apple of his own self-doubting eye, Iago would not have been the confident worm at the core of Othello's faltering ego.

Robeson, too, was a stranger in a foreign land. This was not just because he was a black man. It was because he was an immensely gifted black man. The son of a minister who had escaped from slavery, Robeson was a world-class athlete at Rutgers College. He was a distinguished graduate of Columbia Law School, who abandoned the law when he realized that, as a black man in that profession, he had no future that would do justice to his intelligence. An intellectual as well as an actor and a singer, Robeson taught himself to speak nearly a dozen languages.

But the America he had been born into was a country where, despite all the many opportunities for black entertainers, they often could not dine in the places where they entertained. A singer like Bessie Smith could die after a car accident because an all-white hospital refused to admit her. So, as had Langston Hughes and Richard Wright and scores of talented blacks, Robeson took up residence in Europe.

He lived mostly in London from 1925 to 1939, while traveling widely and returning for brief spells to the States. Robeson loved England all his life. When his passport was returned to him in 1958 after being revoked in 1950, his first step was to fly to England for an extended stay. The vehemently anti-colonialist Robeson's tie to an imperialist country often flummoxed his black American admirers. It disturbed them just as much as Robeson's devotion to a broad assortment of causes, when the fact of white racism at home was what was bedeviling their lives. Yet Robeson's smiling earnestness was no match for the bite behind British sincerity. Or for the higher politesse of a more polished racism. It sporadically ate at him. A voracious womanizer, Robeson also became, in the '30s, something of an exotic attraction for upper-class British women, who passed him around like a sexual toy. After falling in love with one such woman and being rebuffed, Robeson returned to America in 1939 in an embittered state.

Robeson also had begun to realize that he could not build a career on his gifts, rich as they were. He had always expressed honest surprise that he had gotten as far as he had as a singer and an actor.

Robeson discovered the Negro spirituals in the mid-'20s, at the height of the Harlem Renaissance, and his performances of them justifiably made him famous. They are perfect vessels for his gifts. His bass-baritone voice had a warm, weighty radiance, like a boulder glowing in a fire. Its expression of pain was an elemental reassurance. Listening to Robeson's voice now—some fine CDs have been issued relatively recently—you sense its essential quality. In spirituals like "Balm in Gilead," "Steal Away," and "Water Boy," Robeson's musicality lies in the way he makes the songs speak beyond music. Behind his renditions, you hear the naked force of a conception that cannot be grasped by the understanding. That is not talent. Talent resourcefully distills creative power. Robeson's voice was creative power itself. His singing was not so much art as the material art works upon. He didn't sing the raw spirituals. He reiterated them.

A tenor can wring lyrics out of words with phrasing. Baritones need phrasing, too, but also all the drama and physical power they can muster—what a Chaliapin or a Tibbett had. Robeson possessed a gentle, emotional power, not a physical one, and he lacked drama. Nearly everything he sang he made sound like a spiritual—though his version of Marc Blitzstein's "The Purest Kind of Guy" is one of a few marvelous exceptions. Thus, Robeson found himself turning down one prestigious offer after another: an invitation to sing *Aida* for a Chicago opera company, an offer from Gershwin to sing in *Porgy and Bess*.

Robeson knew his limitations. So he turned to folk songs from various cultures, and he explained his repertoire as an expression of communism's supposed faith in a common humanity. But many black artists and intellectuals, who had never really warmed to the associations roused by the spirituals, didn't get too enthusiastic about the folk songs, either. Robeson always suspected that sophisticated audiences were applauding either his charisma or his convictions, but not his artistry.

His acting career did not fare much differently. For one thing, Hollywood offered him the same roles it offered all blacks in Robeson's day: servile Stepin Fetchits, bug-eyed servants, and the like. But on stage, or on film, he relied almost entirely on his commanding presence. His acting—you can see it in the widely available screen version of *The Emperor Jones*—came down to displaying the spectacle of the potential for great acting. As Duberman conscientiously shows, audiences and critics were divided even over Robeson's most legendary interpretations of *Othello* and over both his stage and film performances in *The Emperor Jones*. Indeed, when Robeson found himself trapped in a debasing role—as in the atrocious *Tales of Manhattan*—he fell right into it the more he struggled

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to stretch himself beyond it. Again, on stage, he perhaps felt that the ovations, when they came, were an homage to his genius rather than gratitude for its fulfillment. The constraining gentleness of his artistic power must have quietly enraged him.

In this complexity of personal and circumstantial forces, communism grew to have an indomitable significance for Robeson. Its internationalist spirit was like a glittering ideology of celebrity—unbound by origins, or by skin color, or by place, or by mere finite responsibility. Celebrity is a flattened heroism, a consequence without an act. And Robeson was a flattened hero who, harboring the sanctuary of Moscow in his heart, turned the world into a stage where he thought he could act without consequences.

By the '40s, he had flung himself headlong into the Communist cause. He was the darling of the USSR. He mixed with the highest echelon of the party. His rallies became for him the performances that Hollywood denied him and that his magnificently insufficient gifts deprived him of. As the cold war deepened, as his progressive friends expressed horror at his blindness, Robeson became more rigid in his political beliefs. He seemed to relish the rage he provoked as revenge for the rage he suffered.

I have long thought that Robeson was soaked in receptivity to the point of susceptibility. I think he took his cues for living from a willful misapprehension of the greatest roles he played. His speeches were pompous and windy; his subservience to a party that had long since alienated American blacks was craven; his fanatical public display of trust in Moscow, and his equally public certainty of Moscow's devotion to him in turn, were the height of moral narcissism. He was Othello on a world-historical soapbox.

In April 1949, Robeson took up another script. Attending the Congress of the World Partisans of Peace in Paris, far from Montgomery and Newark, he declared that American blacks would not fight for their country in a war with the Soviet Union, and then he repeated the declaration two days later, in Stockholm.

This was the beginning of the end for Robeson. A year later, the government seized his passport (provoking even Whittaker Chambers, writing in the *National Review*, no less, to express his outrage over the ominous breach of civil rights). The FBI intensified its surveillance and persecution of Robeson, and the McCarthyites did all they could to impede his career. Such efforts, as well as audiences' growing exasperation with Robeson's public stands, helped push him, in 1955, into the first of several mental breakdowns that would leave him a near-vegetable by the end of his life.

Robeson's end was heartbreaking because he indeed had greatness in him. But his declaration earned him the hot water that eventually swirled over his head. For he had callously set himself against the slow progress of American blacks. In 1941, A. Philip Randolph, the powerful and widely respected president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, had persuaded the Urban League and the NAACP to help him rally 10,000 blacks for a march on Washington. The purpose was to force Roosevelt to integrate the defense industries, which until then had been closed to blacks, and Randolph won. In exchange for Randolph's calling off the march, Roosevelt not only banned discrimination in the defense factories but also authorized the creation of a Fair Employment Practices Committee. The party, however, which had repeatedly reneged on its promises to blacks to integrate the CIO's left-wing unions, opposed the integration of the defense industries. It feared, in the wake of the Nazi-Soviet pact, that such a step might make blacks eager to fight a war against Hitler.

In 1948, Randolph shrewdly pressed Truman to integrate the Armed Forces, which Truman eventually did. Robeson's proclamation in 1949 put him beyond the pale not just of the civil rights movement but of any kind of reform politics. Yet the New York Historical Society's Robeson exhibition presented the black civil rights leaders who distanced themselves from Robeson at the time as spineless opportunists. As if an alliance between American blacks and a hostile foreign power was in the best interest of American blacks!

This is a terrible misreading of history. Robeson was no longer speaking for African Americans. He had rubbed a glamorous internationalist ideology all over his black face. He was as dead to black aspirations—and to black political strategy, and to black self-interest—as he was to the Communist slaughter in Europe. The son of an escaped slave, Robeson had put himself in bondage to an enslaving ideology. When, on this coming November 30 (I am writing a week before then), Danny Glover, Whoopi Goldberg, Sidney Poitier, Muhammad Ali, Harry Belafonte, and the academic Henry Louis Gates Jr. gather at Carnegie Hall for "Ol' Man River: A Gala Centennial Celebration to Honor the Legendary Paul Robeson," they will be honoring a man who betrayed his people in the most squalid and self-serving way. Another guest, Paul Newman, can say kaddish for the Russian-Jewish actor, Solomon Mikhoels, tortured and murdered by Communist thugs; though Robeson knew all about it, he never let his friend's killing interfere with his own enjoyment of adoring Soviet officials. And David Rockefeller, also scheduled to be at the party, can build a few schools for inner-city kids.

In *The Emperor Jones*, Robeson played an American black man brutalized by white society. Escaping to a tropical island, he connives to make himself emperor of the people there and subjects them to the brutality once inflicted on him. O'Neill's theme is of a man internalizing his circumstances and of society reaping what it sows. I think Robeson justified his betrayals along the lines of perhaps his greatest role. Yet he was free to choose his betrayals, and he did. To suppress the choices he made is to suppress the whole truth about Paul Robeson. It is also to suppress a truth about the society he was born into. I hope they ponder that on the glittering Carnegie Hall stage. •

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John Kerry takes on the teachers' unions.

SCHOOLYARD TUSSLE

By Dana Milbank

BOSTON

Senator John Kerry displays a glass-encased baseball card in his office featuring his likeness where a slugger's should appear. The card, an award from the National Education Association, proclaims Kerry a member of the union's "Education All-Star Team." In his 14 years in the Senate, Kerry has consistently gone to bat for the NEA, earning a perfect 100 percent in its most recent rating. He didn't vote a single time against the American Federation of Teachers, either, according to that union's latest scoring. Volunteers from the teachers' unions, in return, proved crucial in Kerry's 1996 reelection fight.

All of which makes John Kerry's latest crusade rather puzzling. In twin speeches delivered recently in Boston and Washington, Kerry ostentatiously defied these same teachers' unions, declaring that "we must end teacher tenure as we know it" and proposing "to make every public school in this country essentially a charter school"—in other words, a school free from most of the bureaucratic controls on regular public schools. He decried the "bloated bureaucracy" and "stagnant administration" of schools and demanded higher teaching standards and streamlined certification rules. "Those going into teaching have the lowest SAT and ACT scores of any profession in the United States," he lamented.

Publicly, union officials reacted to Kerry's speech with talk of "mixed feelings." Privately, they groused about Kerry's "teacher-bashing." One NEA official told *The Boston Globe* after Kerry's first speech that "we are not pleased with his swipes at teachers' unions." But Kerry, undaunted, told me in an interview that he'd even approve of government-funded vouchers—good for tuition in any accredited private school—as part of an overall education reform, if that's what it took to make America's schools better.

Just what is John Kerry up to? "I think he's running for president, that's what," says AFT President Sandra Feldman. She's got a point there. Kerry, his aides and confidantes say, used the education speeches as the informal launch of his 2000 presidential campaign. "It's important to make it a component of a national race," affirms Kerry, who hasn't yet committed himself to a run. "It's a point I'd like to take to the country."

To be sure, John Kerry is not likely to ride this issue to the White House. Barring some bizarre twist, he will not be our next president, and he will not be the Democratic nominee—even if he spends a bit of his wife Teresa Heinz's colossal fortune and makes Vice President Gore sweat. He lacks anything near the infrastructure, name recognition, and popularity of the front-runner; his image, to the extent he has one, is that of a Northeastern liberal. Most likely, Kerry is angling for the higher visibility that comes with a presidential run and maybe consideration as vice president or secretary of state.

But, by building his campaign around education, Kerry may well provoke a long-overdue debate over the issue within the Democratic Party. Americans are clearly angry about the state of public schools. And, if the Democrats do not seize the initiative, Republicans may well prevail with a large, uncontrolled rush to vouchers. "If we don't come up with real answers for what ails our schools," Kerry declared in his Boston speech, "then our defense of public schools will become the defeat of the public schools." About this, surely, he is exactly right.

The new South Boston Harbor Academy Charter School has a physical presence not quite befitting its lofty name. It sits across the street from a power plant and shares an alley with a corrugated-metal warehouse. The school building itself says "COMPUTER PRODUCTS POWER CONVERSION"; inside, a hand-lettered, cardboard sign directs visitors to the second floor. A young man, not too long out of school himself, is at the top of the stairs. "I'm the principal," says Brett Peiser, 30 years old. Peiser isn't the only unusual thing here. Like most charter schools, this one has smaller classes (about 20 students per class) and longer days (eight hours a day) than regular public schools. With no union to represent them, the teachers work longer hours and have no tenure protections. But they get a slightly higher wage than starting teachers elsewhere, and they are eligible for merit bonuses. The union says that's no bargain, but apparently a lot of teachers disagree: the school had 700 applicants for eight teaching positions before it opened.

The person in charge of the school is State Senator Stephen Lynch, whose South Boston district is one of the poorest in the state. Lynch has deep union roots: for 18 years he toiled as an ironworker, eventually becoming

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president of his union's 2,000-member Boston local. A few years ago, this hard-bitten Democrat got himself elected to the state legislature and promptly won the AFL-CIO's "legislator of the year" award. But now, as chairman of the South Boston charter school—and one of the legislature's fiercest advocates for charters—he has become the nemesis of the teachers' unions.

He vows to push for an expansion of charters, as well as for government-funded vouchers. "When you know you're absolutely right about something, that other stuff is secondary," he says from his makeshift office. "I have a great respect for the teachers' unions, but there's far too much at stake." Lynch says other Democrats, driven by the wretched state of public schools, are joining his insurgency. "Ideas that were taboo at one time now have a fighting chance," he says.

Indeed, the state's Democrat-dominated legislature, which in 1995 came within a couple of votes of killing charter schools, now gives them overwhelming support. The state's governor, Republican Paul Cellucci, is likely to attempt a further expansion of charters, plus another assault on the state's tenure law, which has already been weakened. Cellucci also wants to loosen the control unions and local districts have over some charter schools. And he may succeed, for even some Democrats have found it's not fatal to take on the teachers' unions here. Three years ago, Thomas Finneran described members of the Massachusetts Teachers Association as "selfish pigs." Today he's speaker of the state House.

The teachers' unions, meanwhile, have their backs to the wall. In April, 59 percent of teaching candidates flunked a new statewide test for prospective teachers. In July, 47 percent failed. Cellucci responded with a proposal not just to test new teachers for competency but to test all teachers every five years, decertifying those who flunk twice. He made it an issue in his successful gubernatorial campaign this fall. And, in a poll cited in *The Boston Globe*, 73 percent of his constituents supported Cellucci's proposal.

"Not only are our teachers alarmed, they're completely demoralized by this," said Massachusetts Teachers Association President Stephen Gorrie when I asked him about the plan. Gorrie, for his part, argued that the union is "in the forefront" of reform, and he says he's all for higher teaching standards: "We view education reform as a huge opportunity." Politicians, he added, "still come courting our endorsement." But Gorrie conceded that several Democrats had broken ranks with the unions. "The political landscape has changed," he said. "They feel they can run a bit on the public perceptions."

And public perceptions increasingly favor radical education reforms. A group of Massachusetts community activists, Democrats mostly, has formed the Citizens United for Charter Schools. They hired a lobbyist and make grants to groups that start charter schools. A ballot initiative to institute vouchers is afoot, though state constitutional hurdles will stop it from becoming a serious possibility for years. Boston's black leaders remain fiercely loyal to the public schools, but there are cracks in the African American community. Judy Burnette, a black former teacher, runs the United in Spirit Coalition in Roxbury, supporting charters and vouchers. Burnette wants to open her own charter school in the near future.

John Kerry was well aware of the groundswell for education reform in his home state before he gambled on the issue this year. And, while it might seem odd to make schools the centerpiece of a presidential campaign—states make most of the big policy decisions, and only seven percent of education funding comes from the federal government—the fact that such a notoriously cautious (some would even say opportunistic) politician as Kerry embraces the cause tells you that it might indeed be a potent issue.

Kerry's most important idea, which he has borrowed from centrist groups like the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), is to turn all public schools into charter schools. He envisions thousands of public schools competing fiercely for students and envisions the competition pushing all schools to get better. "Let's have a bold experiment," he says.

The strongest argument against charter schools is that they skim off the best students, or at least the students with the most involved parents, leaving the rest of the public schools worse than before. That may be so. But the trouble is that the status quo forces all children to suffer rather than letting a few get ahead—to the point where parents want to opt out of the system altogether, a fact Kerry is quick to note. And, while critics say it's far too early to say definitively whether charter schools work at all, there are at least some encouraging signs. A Department of Education study this year found that charter schools had a racial and ethnic mix similar to regular public schools. And parental demand is huge: more than 70 percent of charter schools had more applicants than they could accommodate. There are now 1,129 charter schools in operation, according to the Center for Education Reform, with another 157 approved to open.

The fact that charter schools are so popular also explains the other, more calculating, rationale for expanding them—it may be the only way to avoid a wholesale switch to vouchers. A Gallup poll released in September found that Americans, by 51 percent to 45 percent, favor allowing parents to send children to "any public, private, or church-related school" with government paying "all or part of the tuition." Even in the heavily Democratic District of Columbia, a *Washington Post* poll found that 56 percent of residents favor vouchers for low-income students. In June, businessmen Ted Forstmann and John Walton pledged $100 million for what is essentially a privately funded voucher program to send poor students to private schools; their board includes such Democratic luminaries as Senators John Breaux and Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Representative Charles Rangel.

The trouble with vouchers, as Kerry and other Democrats will tell you, is that they lack accountability; the

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government can't enforce standards at the private schools that get its money. Charter schools, by contrast, operate under contracts with state or local government and thus remain accountable to the government that licenses them. A vast expansion of charter schools, therefore, is less dangerous—but potentially just as rewarding—as a headlong leap into vouchers. "If you do the things I'm proposing, you won't be arguing about vouchers," says Kerry.

In Washington, the education showdown will likely begin next year, in the form of the reauthorization in Congress of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Some Republicans would like to replace Title I—a huge program for educating the poor—with a voucher program or direct grant to the states to allow them to establish voucher programs. They may well succeed unless Democrats present an alternative.

The Kerry plan looks like such an alternative. In addition to expanding charter schools, it would end "social promotion" for underperforming children. It would also end tenure and introduce national educational standards and alternative certification (to allow those with liberal arts degrees, and not just teaching degrees, to teach). Kerry also favors such Democratic (and union) favorites as increased spending for infrastructure and smaller classes but minces no words about his intentions. "I'm for tough love here, folks," Kerry says. "It's time to come in and kick some butts. Democrats can't be viewed as somehow protecting these practices. You can't do this in some loosey-goosey, half-assed way."

Kerry can count on the support of centrist organizations like the DLC. The Clinton administration is also friendly to the idea of expanding charter schools, and it endorses many of the other reforms. The problem, as always, is with the education establishment—and particularly with the unions.

On the one hand, the leaders of both major teachers' unions say they want to put their organizations in the vanguard of reform. NEA chief Bob Chase talks about the "new unionism," an end to the industrial model of conflict; AFT's Feldman calls it "one of the great frustrations of my life" that the union is portrayed as opposing alternative teacher certification and alternatives to tenure. Last year, for example, the NEA, hoping to shed its obstructionist image, even commissioned a report by some image consultants, The Kamber Group. The report suggested "co-opting the other side's turf so the NEA can direct reform discussions rather than having them dictated to it." The Kamber report was very specific, calling for "at least two or three substantive measures the NEA should adopt, or call for, to improve public schools.... The campaign should be launched in a speech by President Chase in which he acknowledges the crisis, says some things for their shock value to open up the audience's minds (e.g., there are bad teachers and our job is to make them good or show the way to another career), and then details the Association's substantive programs to improve public schools."

Chase followed the script to the letter. A few weeks later, he appeared at the National Press Club. "We must revitalize our public schools from within, or they will be dismantled from without," he declared. "I must publicly speak some rather blunt truths.... There are indeed some bad teachers in America's schools. And it is our job as a union to improve those teachers or, that failing, to get them out of the classroom."

But it's not clear how much of this talk is just talk. Take the just-enacted Charter School Expansion Act, which expands funding and incentives to states to open charter schools. Both the AFT and the NEA opposed the measure in the House. When the measure, sponsored by Indiana Democrat Tim Roemer, passed with significant Democratic support, the unions concentrated their efforts on the Senate, winning some small concessions.

In the last days of the session, when it came to a vote, the unions tried to get a senator to place a "hold" on it—which would have killed the measure. But not one Democrat would do their bidding, and the measure passed by unanimous consent. Episodes like these are one reason that Connecticut Democrat Joseph Lieberman, who sponsored the charter legislation in the Senate, says he sees the makings of a revolt against the unions and the rest of the education establishment. "Things are moving in that direction," he says. "We just all have to get together and charge the wall."

To be sure, there are some serious reformers within the union ranks. Adam Urbanski, for example, the president of the Rochester Teachers Association and a member of the AFT's executive council, has formed the Teacher Union Reform Network, devoted to "injecting market dynamics into public education." Urbanski talks about giving parents a choice of any public school, and he favors incentive pay and replacing tenure with a due process dismissal system. Urbanski, however, is unusual. Some say the problem is the state chapters, which resist the progressive thinking of the national leaders. Some think the problem is the NEA; others say it's the AFT. They may all be right.

But the resistance, whatever its source, is becoming less relevant. Last session, on a student savings-account measure that would have helped parents save for private schools, Lieberman almost mustered enough Democratic Senate votes to override President Clinton's veto. A surprising number of Democrats in the Senate, including Moynihan, Mary Landrieu, Joseph Biden, Bob Graham, Robert Torricelli, and Dianne Feinstein, support various heretical education reforms. Virtually no senator voices outright opposition to charter schools. "More Democrats are looking at more options that Democrats didn't look at before," says a White House official. The teachers' unions "realize things could slip away from them." Adds Jeanne Allen, president of the Center for Education Reform, which backs vouchers and charter schools: "People have come to realize these opponents are a paper tiger."

Ironically, another group of the Democrat faithful—urban minorities—is fueling this backlash. Howard

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Fuller, a former superintendent of the Milwaukee Public Schools, has become an outspoken champion of the city's voucher program, one of only two in the country. (The U.S. Supreme Court, in a setback to teachers' unions, this month let the Wisconsin voucher program stand.) Hugh Price, head of the National Urban League, warned in a 1997 speech that parents would "shop elsewhere" if public schools continued to fail. "We Urban Leaguers believe passionately in public education," he said. "But make no mistake. We love our children even more." Other longtime members of the education establishment have come to the same conclusion: this June, Arthur Levine, president of the Columbia University Teachers College, wrote an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal* to say that he, too, was "reluctantly" supporting vouchers for poor students.

While Kerry has been a beneficiary of teachers' union support in the past, he seems unafraid of their wrath. One reason is that he's got his own money to spend on a presidential campaign. (He doesn't accept PAC money anyway.) Another is that confronting the teachers' unions allows Kerry to separate himself from the front-runner, Al Gore, a union ally who has taken to the stump to call vouchers "an illusion wrapped in an insult."

Chase and Feldman try to put the best gloss on this, minimizing their differences with the senator. "I don't necessarily think some of the things he's been saying should be interpreted the way everyone's been interpreting them," says Chase. Feldman agrees: "We disagree with some things, but they're not life-and-death issues." In fact, Kerry met with union officials before his big speeches and tried to pacify them. When Feldman balked at Kerry's idea of making "every school a charter school," Kerry added more words about accountability and high standards.

Union officials also believe that Kerry's policies aren't really as tough as his rhetoric. Though he likes charter schools, they say, he favors the Horace Mann version in Massachusetts, which has collective bargaining, not the Commonwealth charter schools, which are nonunion and sometimes run by for-profit companies. He wants tenure reform, they acknowledge, but he's satisfied with Massachusetts's watered-down tenure law. And, they believe, he remains opposed to vouchers. Conservative education activists offer the same opinion of Kerry: "Rhetoric has value, but, on the details, he loses me," says James Peyser, head of the Pioneer Institute, a think tank in Boston, and a member of the state's Board of Education. "I don't think John Kerry really wants to challenge the big interests of the unions."

But, while it's certainly true that Kerry's proposals aren't as audacious as his rhetoric, the mere fact that he puts out such rhetoric marks a significant milestone in the party's evolution, if not his own. Does Kerry support the Commonwealth schools, which unions hate? "Absolutely." Does he care if charter schools are run by for-profit companies? "Doesn't matter." Has tenure been weakened enough in Massachusetts? "They need to go a little further, and I've said that," he replies. "I know there are teachers who can't be fired, and I have to say it." And what about vouchers? "Clearly it could be part of a mix if you're embracing other reforms," says Kerry, who calls his vote against vouchers for the District of Columbia "very, very hard."

The DLC, which never considered Kerry one of its own, is impressed. One DLC official calls Kerry's plan "the most radical statement of support for charter schools I've heard from any politician in either party." Kerry says he's heard some encouragement from Republicans, too. He also sweetened the tougher parts of his legislation with more spending for infrastructure and teacher salaries. "The unions," Kerry says, "are prepared to sit down at the table if they're met by people who aren't trying to destroy them."

They'd better get to the table quickly, though, because reform will come, with or without them. If you have any doubt, a few minutes at the Neighborhood House Charter School in Boston's Dorchester neighborhood will dispel it. The school was started in 1995 by a group of angry parents. Now it borrows space in a vacant wing of a Catholic school. While public schools are overcrowded, Neighborhood House has 18 students and *two* teachers in each class. It saves money by having only two full-time administrators, and its nonunion teachers, who don't have tenure, work a longer school day and school year. The school also raises a third of its budget from private contributions. And, though the teachers' unions may hate the idea, the local construction trade unions in Dorchester refurbished an old building to give the school expansion room, pro bono.

Before Neighborhood House will admit a student—even though half of its students live in poverty, it has ten applicants for every spot, better than many Ivy League colleges—parents must sign a "family learning contract." This commits parents to attend three conferences a year, to do eight hours of volunteer work at the school, and to give their children a quiet place for homework. A parent coordinator makes home visits, and, if the parents don't honor the bargain, their kids are gone. "We've turned a lot of parents around," says Kristen McCormack, one of the parents who founded Neighborhood House.

McCormack is a Democrat from Dorchester who founded the Boston Food Bank before joining the charter-school movement. She decided to start the school when she saw children in her neighborhood failing in school "through no fault of their own," because the public schools felt "no sense of urgency" to reform. So she pulled her kids out of school and put them in Neighborhood House. "Every school commissioner says this is going to be a ten-year process," she says. "In ten years, my kids are going to be out of the system. I can't wait that long." It's a sentiment echoing across the land—and Democrats like John Kerry are beginning to hear it. In McCormack, the teachers' unions and the education establishment have encountered someone even more powerful than they are: an angry parent. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Wasted Talent

The writer of **Very Bad Things** (Polygram) has done poorly by the director. This is particularly painful because they are the same person, Peter Berg. Director Berg shows lively talent, focused and controlled. Writer Berg shows some talent, too, but he is wobbly in design and purpose. So let's first look at the script.

Los Angeles. Today—at least as scathingly today as *Happiness* and *Your Friends and Neighbors*, which is to say that assumptions about modern moral shallowness govern everything. Yes, extreme immoral actions provoke negative response, but no negative response governs long or deeply. Kyle, an evidently prospering young man, is about to marry Laura. A few days before the wedding, with Laura's blessing, he and four friends go off to Las Vegas for Kyle's bachelor party. (We know the occupation of only one man, Boyd, a realty agent.) Booze and cocaine space out the party in their loudly lush hotel suite, and at last, in response to their call, a stripper appears.

Lap dancing follows, then the inevitable. One of the group, Michael, appropriately heated, takes the stripper into the bathroom for sex at a prearranged fee. In his ecstasy, he lifts her and, quite accidentally, rams the back of her head into and onto a hook on the wall. She dies instantly. "Guys, I fucked up," Michael reports dazedly to his friends in the living room. After the hilarious response to this announcement, the truth shocks and sobers them all. Boyd, almost as if by prearrangement, takes over. (Before Las Vegas, we have seen how he takes command even of his customers.)

Up to now the screenplay has rolled along smoothly, credibly. Here is where the first hint of the author's contrivances appears. Most of the five men want to call the police; Boyd stops them, asks them to reconsider. No one knows the girl was there, he says: why can't they just take her body out into the desert and bury it? Kyle is supposed to get married in a few days; Adam, another of the group, is a married man with two children. Do they really want to get into a mess with the police? Boyd asks.

Well, we can concede that four quite ordinary young men, in the ice-cold fright of such a moment, might agree to Boyd's proposal. Also, however disgustedly, we can concede their complete disregard for the stripper and her fate: she is instantly transmuted from live sex toy to dead nuisance. Persuaded by the facile Boyd, who obviously relishes commanding them, the four others are willing to obey, and we are all set (we think) for the tussles of conscience that will follow in the weeks ahead. Then there's a knock at the door. It's the hotel detective. He tells them that there have been complaints from other guests about their partying. They are joshingly contrite, give him money, and are easing him out of the suite when, through the open bathroom door, he spots the corpse. The detective is then killed—brutally, not accidentally. Boyd delivers the blows, but the four others quickly collaborate.

Even here we can manage to go along with the action. They are all still sealed in unreality. Stark recognition of what they have done, are doing, is not yet within reach as they struggle feverishly to protect the lives they have been living up to this moment. But now the script's maneuvers begin to distance us from the screen. Prompted by Boyd, the men decide that they must cut up the two bodies in order to smuggle them out of the hotel. They buy the equipment in the middle of the night, bring it back, do the job, clean up the suite, and leave. None of this is believable—nor is the assumption that no one in the hotel will have missed the detective or will have known what room he went to.

Incredibility swells as the plot moves on, but that isn't all that bothers. Tone shifts back and forth; we move from a drama into a farce—built around Kyle's wedding—and back into the drama and out again and back again. Other deaths result; other murders happen. What began as a fairly frightening account of the ease with which order can slope into chaos becomes a cobbled film script, blurry in purpose and cheesy in structure.

As we watch the screenplay disintegrate, the regrets multiply: because the picture is so well directed. Berg has worked intensely with his five men to weld them into an ensemble—of party palaver, hysterics, cross-utterances, quarrels, broken statements, florid self-gratifying rhetoric. The five men, joking, teasing, taunting, frenzied, fighting, high on coke or down in dilemma, form a mercurial chorus. Christian Slater as Boyd, Jon Favreau as Kyle, Jeremy Piven and Daniel Stern as two Jewish brothers (their Jewishness figures in the story),

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Dancing at Lughnasa. *Brian Friel's much-praised play is only a distended one-acter, but there's much Irish flavor here—not least in Meryl Streep as the eldest of five love-starved sisters. (Reviewed 11/30/98)* **Happiness.** *Frank exploration of the lovelessness of modern love. Done with outrageous skill. (11/9/98)* **Meet Joe Black.** *Only if, like myself, you will see Anthony Hopkins in anything. Also, if you're interested in the most attractive presentation so far of Brad Pitt. It's freely adapted from the old play* Death Takes a Holiday, *and it's very long. (12/7/98)* **Pleasantville.** *Two 1990s teenagers, brother and sister, are transposed into a 1950s TV serial. Some plot glitches and some present-day smugness, but some laughs. (11/23/98)*—**SK**

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Leland Orser as the near-nerd—all have evidently been fine-honed by Berg. (He is himself an actor, known on TV especially.) Cameron Diaz, drastically different from *There's Something About Mary*, plays Kyle's bride, fluctuating as truthfully as possible between gross conventionality and other kinds of grossness. The very ending, with a hint of *Ethan Frome*, burdens the bride with exactly the fate she dreaded, and Diaz shrieks it through.

Dan Lebental, who edited, has done most of his previous work on music videos, which doubtlessly helped him with the requisite whirling in much of this film. In the frantic scenes he does it so well that the editor, in his editing, almost becomes one of the cast.

But he and the actors and the director have all been short-changed by the author.

James Whale (1896–1957) was exceptionally gifted. Born to an English prole family at the grubby end of the social spectrum, he became elegant and successful, through his talents as actor, designer, and, most memorably, as director. After service in World War I, which included over a year as a POW (where he first did some acting), he became a reasonably successful actor in London, then a highly successful director.

Journey's End, the first important candid play about the Great War, was directed by Whale, and this led to his engagement by Hollywood. There he directed a very wide variety of films, but he is chiefly remembered for *Frankenstein*, *The Bride of Frankenstein*, and *The Invisible Man*. He is also remembered, in the film world at least, as a homosexual who was as open about this fact as one could be in those days. Illness, more than any other factor, drove him to suicide—a *vrai* Hollywood suicide in his swimming pool.

Gods and Monsters (Lions Gate) gives us Whale in the last months of his life. The screenplay was adapted by the director, Bill Condon, from a novel by Christopher Bram. (A biography by James Curtis has lately been published by Faber and Faber.) Whale, no longer directing, is living out his life in his luxe house, cared for by a faithful housekeeper who is still, after years, disapproving of his sexual predilections. Whale becomes fascinated by his new yardman, a husky young fellow who is not gay. In an easeful and practiced way, Whale manifests his interest.

Lynn Redgrave is nearly incomprehensible as the housekeeper with some sort of housekeeperly accent. Brendan Fraser is pleasantly hulking as the yardman being coaxed into new experience. But the film's center is Ian McKellen's performance as Whale. McKellen is an acknowledged—no, avowed—gay man himself, which fact must have figured in his acceptance of the role.

After his earlier film of the season, *Apt Pupil*, in which he played an aged Nazi leader hiding out in the United States and in which he was more generous with character-acting touches than with a character, I was prepared for more or less the same approach in Whale. But here McKellen went for the man rather than the mannerisms. It doesn't seem egregious to assume that he had more empathy for Whale than for the Nazi. In any case, he gives a smooth performance of a man whose ethics were aesthetic, a man who wanted to *live* a smooth performance. Whale apparently was adept at amusing himself, in his being and behavior; McKellen understands this, and thus amuses us. All I could wish for was more about the contrast between the dandy we see and the soot-stained world in which he was born. (One further sad note: Whale was astonishingly handsome. McKellen couldn't do anything about this.) •

Andrew Weil, the boom in alternative medicine, and the retreat from science.

A Trip to Stonesville

BY ARNOLD S. RELMAN

I.

Andrew Weil, M.D., is variously described on the covers of his best-selling books as "the guru of alternative medicine," "one of the most skilled, articulate, and important leaders in the field of health and healing," "a pioneer in the medicine of the future," and "an extraordinary phenomenon." On his website, which records over two and a half million hits a month, he is called "America's most trusted medical expert." A recent cover of *Time*, which featured the familiar picture of his bald head and bewhiskered cherubic countenance, announced that "medicine man Dr. Andrew Weil has made New Age remedies popular." In the accompanying story, *Time* tells us that "millions of Americans swear by" his medical advice.

Not all of this is hype. Weil is arguably the best known and most influential of the many physician-writers now in the vanguard of the alternative medicine movement. He is also one of the most prolific. Since 1972 he has written eight books. The first three were mostly about the effects of natural drugs on consciousness, but the remaining five, all published in the past fifteen years, are about health and healing. Read together with one remarkable chapter in his first book, these more recent works provide a comprehensive description of alternative medicine, as seen through the eyes of its most serious and systematic advocate.

If Deepak Chopra is the mystical poet-laureate of the movement, then Weil is its heavy-duty theoretician and apologist. He directs a large and astonishingly successful medical marketing enterprise that might be called Dr. Andrew Weil, Inc. No longer the angry young rebel, he has become the urbane and supremely self-assured CEO of alternative medicine, who is seeking to reshape the medical establishment that he once scorned. The popularity of his teachings, and the spreading wave of interest in alternative remedies that he and others have inspired, are forcing mainstream medicine to deal with a counterculture that it would have preferred to ignore.

"Alternative medicine" is the term generally used to designate a varied collection of methods for the prevention, the diagnosis, or the treatment of disease that are not generally accepted by regular (or "allopathic") physicians and have not been part of the standard medical school curriculum in the United States.

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Some of these methods are very old. Acupuncture and other kinds of traditional Chinese medicine, as well as the Ayurvedic medicine of ancient Hinduism, were practiced before the Christian era, and they still flourish. Native American shamans and medicine men used herbal and ritual healing before the European conquest of America, and such practices still exist. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many healing cults were contending with allopathic physicians for popular support. These included homeopathy, naturopathy, and herbal medicine, psychic and faith healing, magnetic therapy and chiropracty and osteopathy. More recent twentieth-century additions to the alternative medicine family include therapeutic touch, guided imagery, biofeedback, and various forms of diet therapy. In the past few years, two new terms have come into use: "complementary medicine" and "integrative medicine." They identify a recent development in the alternative medicine movement championed by Weil and others: the idea that alternative medicine should be used in conjunction with, rather than instead of, mainstream allopathic methods.

Until now, alternative medicine has generally been rejected by medical scientists and educators, and by most practicing physicians. The reasons are many, but the most important reason is the difference in mentality between the alternative practitioners and the medical establishment. The leaders of the establishment believe in the scientific method, and in the rule of evidence, and in the laws of physics, chemistry, and biology upon which the modern view of nature is based. Alternative practitioners either do not seem to care about science or explicitly reject its premises. Their methods are often based on notions totally at odds with science, common sense, and modern conceptions of the structure and the function of the human body. In advancing their claims, they do not appear to recognize the need for objective evidence, asserting that the intuitions and the personal beliefs of patients and healers are all that is needed to validate their methods. One might have expected such thinking to alienate most people in a technologically advanced society such as ours; but the alternative medicine movement, and the popularity of gurus such as Weil, are growing rapidly.

Weil's writings are ambiguous about the conflict between science and alternative medicine, as they are about many other issues in alternative medicine. Yes, he thinks that all healing methods ought to be tested; and yes, modern science can make useful contributions to our understanding of health and disease. Yet the scientific method is not, for Weil, the only way, or even the best way, to learn about nature and the human body. Many important truths are intuitively evident and do not need scientific support, even when they seem to contradict logic. Conventional science-based medicine has its uses, but they are limited. Like so many of the other gurus of alternative medicine, Weil is not bothered by logical contradictions in his argument, or encumbered by a need to search for objective evidence.

This habit of thought was evident early in Weil's career. He was educated at Harvard College and Harvard Medical School in the '60s, but he revolted against those academic bastions. Like many other students of his generation, he experimented with mind-altering drugs. He was a botany major and, not surprisingly for those days, he became interested in the psychedelic properties of certain plants. Later, in medical school, he participated in studies of the clinical and psychological effects of marijuana, which led to a few publications in scientific journals. He also developed a strong antipathy toward many of the basic concepts of conventional medicine, and the traditional pedagogical methods then employed to teach them.

Ask Dr. Weil
by Andrew Weil
edited by Steven Petrow
(Fawcett Columbine, 291 pp., $12.95)

Eight Weeks to Optimum Health
by Andrew Weil
(Fawcett Columbine, 276 pp., $13.95)

Spontaneous Healing
by Andrew Weil
(Fawcett Columbine, 309 pp., $12.95)

Natural Health, Natural Medicine
by Andrew Weil
(Houghton Mifflin, 370 pp., $13)

Health and Healing
by Andrew Weil
(Houghton Mifflin, 296 pp., $13)

From Chocolate to Morphine
by Andrew Weil and Winifred Rosen
(Houghton Mifflin, 240 pp., $15)

The Marriage of the Sun and Moon
by Andrew Weil
(Houghton Mifflin, 289 pp., $14)

The Natural Mind
by Andrew Weil
(Houghton Mifflin, 226 pp., $14)

We learn a little about Weil's postgraduate years from the brief autobiographical comments in the preface to *The Natural Mind*, his first book. After a one-year internship at Mount Zion Hospital in San Francisco in 1968–69, he began what was supposed to have been a two-year tour of duty at the National Institute of Mental Health. He resigned after a year. He says it was because of official opposition to his work with marijuana. He then left the world of allopathic medicine entirely, to go off to an Indian reservation in South Dakota to study with a Sioux medicine man and learn about herbal medicine and ritual healing. "On the reservation," he says, "I participated in sweat lodge ceremonies, grew a beard, and 'dropped out.'" At home afterward, "I started to practice yoga, experiment with vegetarianism, and learn to meditate." In 1971 he began to write *The Natural Mind*, which became a best-seller and launched his career as a writer.

The Natural Mind (1972) is mainly a criticism of American drug policy and an exposition of Weil's views on the interaction of psychedelic drugs with the mind. It also expounds his general philosophy of mind-body relations upon which much of his later writings on health and healing is based. The seventh chapter, entitled "A Trip to Stonesville," should be required reading for all who would understand the origins of Weil's belief in the healing power of the mind. It is a startling document—a sharply drawn manifesto of New Age biology, a direct challenge to the scientific basis of conventional medicine, and a revealing window on Weil's style of thought. And, since a theory of mind-body relations is central to most current formulations of alternative medicine, this chapter must be considered one of the movement's most important philosophical statements. It merits a detailed examination.

According to Weil, many of his basic insights about the causes of disease and the nature of healing come from what he calls "stoned thinking," that is, thoughts experienced while under the influence of psychedelic agents or during other states of "altered consciousness" induced by trances, ritual magic, hypnosis, meditation, and the like. He cites some of the characteristics of "stoned thinking" that give it advantages over "straight" thinking; these include a greater reliance on "intuition" and an "acceptance of the ambivalent nature of things," by which he means a tolerance for "the coexistence of opposites that appear to be mutually antagonistic." In Weil's view, intellect, logic, and inductive reasoning from observed fact are the limited instruments of "straight" thinking, and should be subservient to guidance by the intuitive insights that are gained during states of altered consciousness and "stoned" thinking.

Weil tells us that "the history of science makes clear that the greatest

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advancements in man's understanding of the universe are made by intuitive leaps at the frontiers of knowledge, not by intellectual walks along well-traveled paths." He neglects to add, unfortunately, that to be successful these "intuitive leaps" had to explain all of the relevant observed facts. Intuition can be a valuable tool for interpreting the facts, and even for guessing what the facts will prove to be, but it cannot substitute for the facts. Yet Weil may not agree with this. He asserts that "there exists within us a source of direct information about reality that can teach us all we need to know." Does he mean that this inner "source" need not conform to observed facts? Apparently so, because chapter seven's main thrust is to assert the primacy of intuition over observation. In Weil's mind, intuition, no matter how bizarre and unsubstantiated, rules the day. But if intuition rules, how would we find the truth when one person's intuition conflicts with another's? Weil does not appear to consider that a problem, either. For, as "stoned thinking" reveals, there is not one truth, but many truths. Reality itself is basically "ambivalent."

ANDREW WEIL BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Weil notes that the wisdom of "stoned thinking" is reflected in the teachings of Oriental philosophies and religions, which have always understood the essentially "ambivalent" nature of reality. He further contends that, with quantum theory, modern physicists have pursued this idea about the paradoxical ambivalence of reality into the subatomic world, "where they find that entities like electrons and photons can exist either as waves or particles, energy or matter." "Ordinary consciousness" cannot accept such riddles, he says, but modern physicists can, and so can those who learn "stoned thinking." In states of "altered consciousness" we wipe out contradictions and resolve perplexities such as the mind-body problem. We see that "mind and body are really the two expressions of the same phenomenon—just as waves and particles are two phases of expression of the entity called an electron." I will return to Weil's invocation of quantum physics in support of his arguments, because it reflects a basic misunderstanding that underlies much of the present revolt against science and science-based medicine.

There is more of this kind of thing in the remainder of his "Stonesville" chapter, much of which defies rational belief or is just plain wrong about the facts. Weil states, for example, that "stoned" thinking enables us to gain control of our autonomic, or involuntary, nervous system, and that the practical application of this thinking in the form of "autonomic feedback control" enables patients to control high blood pressure more effectively and safely than by the use of antihypertensive drugs. He claims that allopathic physicians "have no effective drug for high blood pressure." Now, even in 1972, when *The Natural Mind* was first published, this statement was dubious, to say the least; and it was certainly false in 1985 when the book was republished and supposedly updated. Weil tells us that patients can be taught to lower their blood pressure by a form of training called "feedback control." The fact is that "feedback control" (or "the relaxation response," as it is called by Dr. Herbert Benson, its chief advocate and another well-known guru of alternative medicine) produces at most only small and usually transient reductions in blood pressure. Feedback control has never been shown to be as effective in the long-term control of moderate to severe hypertension as any of a variety of pharmacological agents prescribed for this purpose.

There are always risks of side effects with any active pharmaceutical, and antihypertensive agents are no exception. When properly used, however, they have proven beyond reasonable doubt to be a major advance in medical therapeutics. In fact, they are one big reason for the significant decline over the past three decades in the incidence of stroke, heart failure, and kidney failure, all of which can result from uncontrolled, severe hypertension. Weil would have been correct if he had simply observed that anti-hypertensive drugs are often used excessively, particularly when blood pressure is only mildly elevated. He would also have been correct had he suggested that a reduction in stress and a change in diet and lifestyle will often help in the management of such cases. But in *The Natural Mind* he suggests that self-treatment is the treatment of choice in many if not most cases. In his more recent books about self-healing approaches to health care, he is more prudent: he advises patients to check their own blood pressure and to seek guidance from an allopathic physician if simple remedies are not working. Unfortunately, the anti-allopathic thrust in his teaching is more apt to be heeded than his cautions and his qualifications. Seriously hypertensive patients who delay seeking proper medical treatment may, as a result, suffer great harm. The neglect of available and often effective standard medical treatment for many kinds of illness would seem to be an inevitable consequence of the dogma promulgated in the seventh chapter of *The Natural Mind.*

Here are other examples of Weil's casual dismissal of common sense and medical fact in this chapter, and of his penchant for sweeping generalizations

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that cannot stand analysis. "My intuitions about disease are: first, that its physical manifestations are mostly caused by nonmaterial factors, in particular by unnatural restraints placed on the unconscious mind; and second, that the limits to what human consciousness can cause in the physical body are far beyond where most of us imagine them." Or, again: "Since leaving the world of allopathic practice, I have witnessed a number of impressive nonallopathic cures of ... dramatic illnesses, including cancer and life-threatening infections." And later: "To the straight mind nonallopathic healing sounds very mystical. Faith healing is held in contempt by most rational people, *despite the abundant evidence of cures*." (The italics are mine.)

Weil's later books make many claims for such "cures," as we shall see, but despite his reference to "abundant evidence," he almost never gives us anything more than the claim itself—unsupported by objective and documented observations. To Weil, subjective belief, if persuasive enough to the patient, should be adequate to support the claim of reality. And by "reality" he does not refer simply to the patient's state of mind, but to the physical dimensions of the disease itself. The allegedly miraculous "cures" are not simply dramatic improvements in symptoms, but the disappearance of all physical evidence of disease. And why shouldn't this be reasonable if one believes, like Weil, that consciousness is the primary reality and that the physical aspects of disease, indeed the entire material world itself, are simply another aspect of mind?

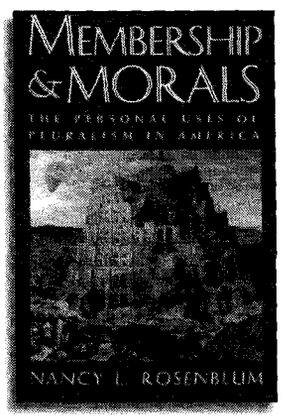
The extent to which Weil reveres consciousness regardless of its thought content is revealed in the final sections of his "Stonesville" chapter. Here he favors us with his views on psychosis, on the Jungian theory of shared universal consciousness, and on the reality of mental telepathy, extrasensory perception, and hallucinatory experiences. On psychosis: "Psychotics are persons whose nonordinary experience is exceptionally strong ... every psychotic is a potential sage or healer." With regard to the National Institute of Mental Health's research efforts to find the physical basis of psychosis: "If it sticks to its present course, NIMH will be the last institution in America to recognize the positive potential of psychosis—a potential so overwhelming that I am almost tempted to call psychotics the evolutionary vanguard of our species. They possess the secret of changing reality by changing the mind; if they can learn to use that talent for positive ends, there are no limits to what they can accomplish." With respect to C.G. Jung's ideas, Weil says: "It appears that at some level of the unconscious we pass beyond personal awareness into a universal awareness unlimited by time and space. Most of us may think we never experience such a thing, but it may be that we simply never pay attention to it. I am convinced it happens." He then cites examples of such experiences caused by the ingestion of hallucinogenic herbs in Indian sacramental rituals. About shared consciousness and mental telepathy, he has this to say: "Not only do I think each of us can share consciousness, I think all of us are already doing it all the time.... Extrasensory perceptions are not unusual talents possessed by specially gifted individuals. They are normal unconscious events, and scientists who attempt to document them by laboratory experiments will never get to experience them directly."

One might think that this kind of talk, written more than 25 years ago by a youthful and angry rebel against medical scientific orthodoxy, would be an embarrassment to the 56-year-old leader of a movement that aspires to integrate alternative concepts into the curriculum and the practice of conventional medicine. Not so. In a brief preface to the edition of *The Natural Mind* that appeared this year, Weil explicitly reaffirms his early views: "The philosophy of my first book is the same philosophy that underlies my writing about health." To be even more specific, he adds: "The seed of my thinking about conventional and alternative medicine can be found in Chapter 7 of this book."

So we must take him at his word: he really does believe in miracles and in faith healing, in the ability of mind to cause and to cure disease, and in the existence of a consciousness that is in some real sense independent of the brain. In fact, these ideas reverberate in all of his later writing. The seventh chapter of *The Natural Mind* is simply the first and most forceful statement of a philosophy that has softened and blurred a bit, as Weil's career has progressed, but is fundamentally unchanged. And this philosophy poses serious intellectual problems for Weil's current attempt to integrate alternative and conventional medical practices.

II.

The Natural Mind was followed by two more popular books about consciousness and mind-altering drugs—*The Marriage of the Sun and Moon: A Quest*



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for Unity in Consciousness (1980); and, with Winifred Rosen, *From Chocolate to Morphine: Everything You Need to Know About Mind-Altering Drugs* (1983). Neither book dealt directly with alternative medicine. His next book on medicine was *Health and Healing* (1983, republished in 1998). By then Weil had established himself in Tucson as a general medical practitioner and was on the part-time clinical faculty of the College of Medicine of the University of Arizona, where he gave an elective course of lectures about alternative medicine.

Health and Healing was the first of a series of five books he was to write in the years from 1983 to 1998 and, like most of them, it was a national bestseller. It established Weil as a leading figure in the alternative medicine movement. More than any of his writings before or after, it provided a broad and fairly systematic exposition of his opinions on the nature of health and healing, on allopathic medicine, and on the varieties of alternative or unconventional medicine. In the preface to the 1998 edition of *Health and Healing*, Weil remarks that "it remains the philosophical and theoretical basis of all my subsequent work in medicine."

Consider Weil's strange discussion in this book of sickness and health. "Sickness is the manifestation of evil in the body," he proclaims, "just as health is the manifestation of holiness. Sickness and health are not simply physical states.... They are rooted in the deepest and most mysterious strata of Being." He introduces these ideas in the context of his views on the connection between religion, magic, and medicine. "In our society," he observes, "the commonality of religion, magic, and medicine is obscured. Our medical doctors have narrowed their view to pay attention only to the physical body and the material aspects of illness. As a result ... they do not see or integrate the nonphysical forces that animate and direct the physical body," and they do not realize that "health and illness are particular manifestations of good and evil, requiring all the help of religion and philosophy to understand and all the techniques of magic to manipulate. Science and intellect can show us mechanisms and details of physical reality—and that knowledge is surely of value—but they cannot unveil the deep mysteries. You cannot restore health in yourself or in others until you know in your heart what health is."

Lest we despair of ever knowing in our heart what health is, Weil unveils the mystery: "Health is wholeness—wholeness in its most profound sense, with nothing left out and everything in just the right order to manifest the mystery of balance. Far from being simply the absence of disease, health is a dynamic and harmonious equilibrium of all the elements and forces making up and surrounding a human being." Health, it seems, is a mystery explained by another mysterious principle. This is the "mystery of balance."

Weil follows this revelation with an additional "ten principles of health and illness," the most mysterious of which is the last: "Proper breathing is a key to good health." He explains that breathing, since it can be voluntary or involuntary, is a "bridge between the conscious and unconscious minds as well as between mind and body. Proper breathing nourishes the central nervous system, establishes a harmonious pattern for other bodily rhythms, and also regulates moods and emotions.... Improper breathing is a common cause of ill health. By decreasing general vitality, it increases susceptibility to agents of disease. It can also directly cause problems in many different systems of the body. Learning how to breathe and working consciously with breath is a simple, safe, effective, and inexpensive way to promote good health of mind and body."

"Breathing" is an important and recurring theme in Weil's prescriptions for health and healing, and it holds a prominent place in *Eight Weeks to Optimum Health*, which appeared in 1997. As far as I can see, his opinions on this subject are largely nonsense. There is not the slightest medical evidence that "improper breathing is a common cause of ill health." All the clinical and physiological evidence points to exactly the reverse relationship. It suggests that many types of disease and physiological dysfunction can affect breathing. Sometimes this secondary change in breathing can be serious enough to change the normal intake of oxygen or the normal elimination of carbon dioxide in ways that further impair health; but the primary causes of the problem are the diseases or the physiological disturbances that cause the abnormal pattern of breathing, not the breathing itself.

While it is true that conscious attention to breathing can help individuals to relax, there is no evidence that the breathing exercises Weil advocates have any special advantage over any other techniques for relaxation, or that they have any special therapeutic powers. Like so many of his other pronouncements, Weil's claims about breathing come *ex cathedra* from his own self-asserted authority as guru and healer. Much of what he has to say about health and healing in this book and in his later works is just like this fanciful section on breathing—a bald assertion without any credible rationale or supporting objective evidence.

Then there is Weil's typically ambiguous assessment of conventional, or allopathic, medicine. First he concedes that it is not all bad, and that "regular medicine is the most effective system I know for dealing with many common and serious problems," among them acute medical and surgical emergencies. But then he adds that "regular medicine is on very shaky ground" in dealing with other common problems. "I would look elsewhere than conventional medicine for help if I contracted a severe viral disease like hepatitis or polio, or a metabolic disease like diabetes. I would not seek allopathic treatment for cancer, except for a few varieties, or for such chronic ailments as arthritis, asthma, hypertension (high blood pressure), multiple sclerosis, or for many other chronic diseases...." This is a startling list of major diseases to be ruled off-limits for conventional medicine. One wonders which of the remaining chronic diseases Weil is willing to concede to the allopaths, and how he knows where to draw the line.

Some of Weil's criticisms of medical practitioners in this and other books are nonetheless valid. I agree with him that conventional physicians are often too interested in the disease and not enough interested in the patient; too inclined to use expensive technology and potent pharmaceuticals when simpler and more conservative approaches would work at least as well. And he is correct in noting that mainstream medicine, despite its many successes, still has only a limited ability to change the course of many serious chronic illnesses. Yet that hardly justifies Weil's sweeping and irresponsible dismissal of allopathic medicine's role in the diagnosis, the management, and the palliation of all the serious illnesses that he enumerates and the indeterminate list to which he alludes. He implies that alternative medicine could do better, but there is no published evidence to support that opinion.

And even if Weil's assertions about the superiority of alternative methods for the treatment of some diseases were correct, how could patients be expected to know when to seek help from alternative healers unless they knew in advance what was wrong with them? One of the main reasons to consult a physician is to determine whether symptoms need to be taken seriously and what might be causing them. Weil's advice could result in dangerous delays in the diagnosis and

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the treatment of serious illness, unless he were also to recommend that patients first seek competent medical evaluation and advice before considering unconventional treatments. That may be what he had in mind in recently establishing an "integrative medicine" clinic at the University of Arizona, in which allopathic physicians prescribe both conventional and unconventional treatments. Still, without credible evidence that unconventional treatments are equivalent to, or better than, standard medical care, even that eclectic approach is seriously flawed.

III.

One of Weil's central themes in *Health and Healing*, and in his subsequent work, is his criticism of mainstream medicine's reliance on pharmaceuticals instead of herbal medicines. The latter are presently enjoying a great resurgence in popularity, due largely to the endorsement of prominent advocates such as Weil, and to the promotional activities of a "natural products" industry that received a big boost in 1994, when Congress gave the industry permission to market herbal preparations with less rigorous oversight by the FDA than the agency exercises over drugs. Manufacturers of herbal preparations can avoid many of the customary rigors of FDA drug regulation simply by labeling these products "dietary supplements." In 1997, the herbal medicine market had sales of nearly $4 billion, and a stroll down the aisles of almost any supermarket or chain drugstore will confirm that business is booming. A cover story in *Time* magazine a few weeks ago was all about this burgeoning new herbal remedy business and the popular craze for "natural" medicines.

Weil's preference for herbs and his dislike of synthetic pharmaceutical products probably stem from his earlier training in botany and his long interest in the psychedelic properties of plants. It also reflects his belief in the virtues of "natural" healing methods that patients themselves can employ without recourse to physicians or expensive medical technology. Herbs can be purchased without prescription and are relatively inexpensive in comparison with prescription drugs. In earlier times herbs were the only medicinal remedies available, and botany was a part of the medical school curriculum. But then scientists learned how to extract and synthesize the active constituents of medicinal herbs, and medical botany was replaced by modern pharmacology.

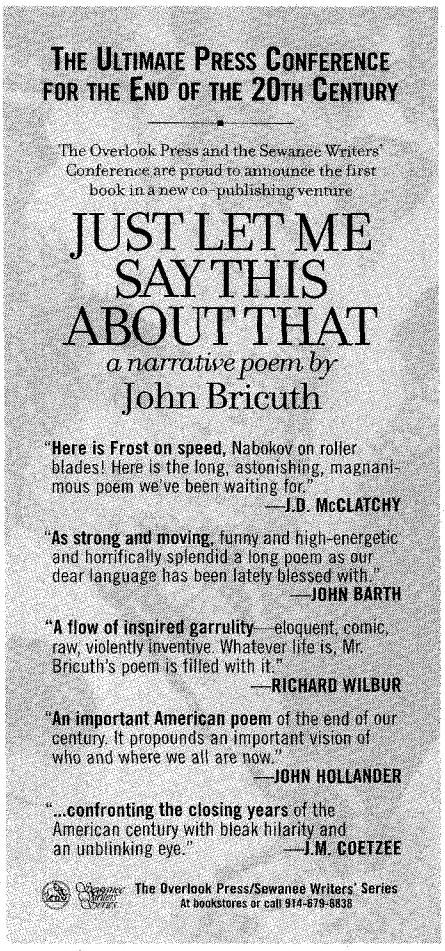
Modern pharmacological science now provides physicians with a vast armamentarium of clinically effective synthetic compounds, many derived from or closely related to substances found in nature, others created in the laboratory. These pure compounds can be standardized and tested for purity, clinical potency, and safety far more easily than the complex and highly variable natural plant materials doctors formerly prescribed. In some advanced Western countries—in Germany, for example—herbal medicines are still widely prescribed, but the manufacture, the purity, and the potency of these preparations are far more carefully regulated by the government than in the United States.

Weil doesn't like the modern pharmaceutical industry and he wants us to return to our former dependence on herbs. His arguments are on balance unconvincing, but they are not without some reason. Weil has an arguable case, I think, when he criticizes the pharmaceutical industry for promoting expensive new drugs that have little or no advantage over older and less expensive drugs, and for sometimes being insufficiently attentive to their risks. I also have some sympathy with his criticism of the excessive prescribing of potent pharmaceuticals by physicians, and the common practice of prescribing many drugs simultaneously without sufficient attention to their toxic or interactive effects. There is no doubt that improper use of pharmaceuticals, including mistakes in dosage and even inadvertent administration of the wrong drug, causes many serious mishaps in hospital and office practice. Even the proper use of drugs can sometimes cause fatal reactions. Misuse of antibiotics can cause the development of drug-resistant strains of bacteria.

Still, the fact remains that pharmaceuticals are an essential part of medical practice. Without them there would be no effective treatment or palliation of many serious diseases. On balance, the good done by modern pharmaceuticals far outweighs the harm, though zealous advocates of "natural" remedies (Weil among them) insist otherwise. Even in Germany, where botanical medicines are widely used by allopathic physicians, pharmaceutical drugs are the mainstay of treatment for serious illnesses.

Weil claims that the presence of many different active and inactive ingredients, known and unknown, makes natural botanical products safer and more effective than synthetic pharmaceuticals. This is mostly speculation, since there have been very few clinical trials directly comparing herbs with pharmaceuticals in the treatment of specific ailments. What Weil does not mention, here or elsewhere in his books, are the problems created by the lack of purity and standardization of herbal products. A recent issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* contained several reports of serious clinical complications resulting from adulterants or contaminants in commercial preparations of herbs. As an accompanying editorial in the *Journal* noted, there can be no safe and rational use of herbal medicines without regulation of their purity and their potency—even assuming that there were evidence of potentially useful clinical effects.

Weil has a good word to say for almost all alternative healing methods, except for some practices used by so-called "holistic" physicians. "Holistic medicine" is an outdated term that formerly referred to many of the same methods in common use by today's alternative healers, but also included other less widely used methods of diagnosis and treatment that have not attracted much attention recently. Why Weil singles the latter out for disapproval is not entirely clear, since his criticisms would seem to apply equally to many of the alternative methods that he does endorse. In any case, after a general review of the latter, he concludes that the belief of the healer and the patient in the effectiveness of the various forms of alternative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treatment is the common explanation that ties them all together. This is his conclusion: "Since belief alone can elicit healing, the occasional success of treatments based on absurd theories is not mysterious."

Weil next considers the healing power of the placebo effect, by which he means the faith of the patient and the practitioner in the therapeutic value of whatever treatment is being used. He says that all treatments depend more or less on this faith, and that is why any treatment, real or imaginary, may be able to cure any disease in certain patients by helping them to mobilize their innate healing powers. Sometimes the result is mainly due to the direct physical action of the treatment, and sometimes it is mainly due to the patient's own belief in the treatment, and sometimes it appears to be a combination of effects. Weil probably believes that herbal remedies, diet, physical exercise, and other lifestyle changes belong mainly in the first category. Faith healing, therapeutic touch, magnetism, and most of the other more esoteric alternative healing methods would probably be placed in the second category. Meditation, breathing exercises, biofeedback, acupuncture, musculoskeletal manipulations, and yoga would probably be placed in the third category.

How does Weil know that any of these alternative methods, or any combination of them, regardless of the way they work, can cure disease? Because he has been told about, or thinks that he has seen, apparent cures of supposedly incurable diseases that could not be otherwise explained. And where is the documented, objective evidence of such cures? There isn't any. We simply must trust Weil's opinion, and the belief of those who report these events to him. Weil's books are full of such stories, none supported by anything resembling scientific evidence.

Here are some examples. In *Eight Weeks to Optimum Health*, Weil tells about a letter he received from a patient who wrote: "Six years ago (I'm now twenty-seven) the doctors threw the ugly 'C-word' at me and made it sound like a death sentence. (It was bone cancer.) They decided that they were the authorities and I was the victim and the only way was their way. I walked out of their offices never to return. I took up biking (about five hundred miles a week) and running (about sixty miles a week), and ate fresh fruit, juices, and whole grains . . . nothing else. Too bad more people out there won't acknowledge what a little self-determination and using one's subconscious can do to return a person to wholeness." The patient goes on to say that he or she is now entirely well and hopes to "work toward developing programs for others to offer them alternative pathways toward health and wholeness." How do we know that this person really had "bone cancer" and what really happened? We don't know, of course, but that doesn't seem to concern Weil, who cites the case without further comment as evidence of self-induced healing of a serious disease.

In the same book, Weil tells about a woman patient who had "an unusual form of Parkinson's disease" which caused her to have frequent seizures during sleep. Presumably in response to Weil's advice, she tried "acupuncture, yoga, massage, meditation and other stress-reduction work," and finally "respiratory biofeedback," which eventually caused the seizures to stop. Here again, there is no medical documentation of the diagnosis or the alleged effects of the alternative treatments.

A final example comes from *Spontaneous Healing* (1995). It concerns a man with scleroderma (a usually progressive and fatal disease of the skin and internal organs, thought to be an autoimmune disorder) who cured himself with vinegar, lemons, aloe vera juice and vitamin E. How does Weil know this really happened? Apparently, the patient told him so. It was only a testimonial but, as Weil explains in *Spontaneous Healing*, he finds these stories meaningful. "I collect this material, save it, and take it seriously. In its totality and range and abundance it makes one powerful point: People can get better . . . from all sorts of conditions or diseases, even very severe ones of long duration."

That people usually "get better," that most relatively minor diseases heal spontaneously or seem to improve with simple common remedies, is hardly news. Every physician, indeed every grandmother, knows that. Yet before we accept Weil's contention that serious illnesses such as "bone cancer," "Parkinson's disease," or "scleroderma" are similarly curable, or respond to alternative healing methods, we need at least to have some convincing medical evidence that the patients whom he reports in these testimonials did indeed suffer from these diseases, and that they were really improved or healed. The perplexity is not that Weil is using "anecdotes" as proof, but that we don't know whether the anecdotes are true.

Anecdotal evidence is often used in the conventional medical literature to suggest the effectiveness of treatment that has not yet been tested by formal clinical trials. In fact, much of the mainstream professional literature in medicine consists of case reports—"anecdotes," of a kind. The crucial difference between those case reports and the testimonials that abound in Weil's books (and throughout the literature of alternative medicine) is that the case reports in the mainstream literature are almost always meticulously documented with objective data to establish the diagnosis and to verify what happened, whereas the testimonials cited by alternative medicine practitioners usually are not. Weil almost never gives any objective data to support his claims. Almost everything is simply hearsay and personal opinion.

To the best of my knowledge, Weil himself has published nothing in the peer-reviewed medical literature to document objectively his personal experiences with allegedly cured patients or to verify his claims for the effectiveness of any of the unorthodox remedies he uses. He is not alone in this respect. Few proponents of alternative medicine have so far published clinical reports that would stand the rigorous scientific scrutiny given to studies of traditional medical treatments published in the serious medical journals. Alternative medicine is still a field rich in undocumented claims and anecdotes and relatively lacking in credible scientific reports.

IV.

The growing interest of the medical establishment in studying alternative medicine may soon establish the credibility—or the incredibility—of alternative medical notions. In the absence of supporting evidence, however, skepticism is surely in order, particularly since belief in much of what Weil is saying about mind and body, and the ability of consciousness to operate in the physical world, requires a rejection of the fundamental physical laws upon which our current views of nature and the human body are based.

This does not appear to ruffle Weil, who believes that these laws have already been changed. Indeed, he argues that physicians need to understand that modern quantum physics has overturned much of classical physical theory and is revealing a new perspective on nature, in which the observing mind is the primary reality, and can cause natural phenomena to behave oddly. It is time for us to reject the old-fashioned scientific materialism, says Weil. "What most medical doctors do not know is that the scientific model of reality has changed radically since 1900 and no longer views the universe as an orderly mechanism independent of the consciousness observing it."

In one of the final chapters of *Health*

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and Healing, called "What Doctors Can Learn from Physicists," Weil offers his interpretation of the revelations of quantum physics. Experimental data have shown that when observed one way, light seems to be acting like a wave, and when observed another way, it acts like a stream of particles. Quantum theory embraces that paradox in a probabilistic, mathematical description of subatomic physical phenomena that seems incomprehensible to common sense and ordinary experience, but that accords with the experimental data. Weil's interpretation of quantum theory is that it forces us "to consider consciousness [by which he presumably means the mind of the observer] as an active agent in the formation of reality, inseparable from it." And so he concludes that "in the world of ordinary experience, the materialistic and mechanistic theories of the past may continue to seem right and work as reasonable approximations, but if consciousness has to be included to explain observed properties of atomic particles, it cannot be independent of systems composed of those particles, whether rocks, stars, plants, or, especially, human beings." According to Weil, quantum physics in effect validates his "stoned thinking," because it demonstrates that ultimate reality is in the mind of the observer, and thoughts can make anything happen. Thus Weil can believe in miraculous cures even while claiming to be rational and scientific, because he thinks that quantum theory supports his views.

Yet the leading physicists of our time do not accept such an interpretation of quantum theory. They do not believe quantum theory says anything about the role of human consciousness in the physical world. They see quantum laws as simply a useful mathematical formulation for describing subatomic phenomena that are not adequately handled by classical physical theory, although the latter remains quite satisfactory for the analysis of physical events at the macrolevel. Steven Weinberg has observed that "quantum mechanics has been overwhelmingly important to physics, but I cannot find any messages for human life in quantum mechanics that are different in any important way from those of Newtonian physics." And overriding all discussions of the meaning of quantum physics is the fundamental fact that quantum theory, like all other scientific law, is only valid to the extent that it predicts and accords with the evidence provided by observation and objective measurement. Richard Feynman said it quite simply: "Observation is the ultimate and final judge of the truth of an idea." Feynman also pointed out that scientific observations need to be objective, reproducible, and, in a sense, public—that is, available to all interested scientists who wish to check the observations for themselves.

Surely almost all scientists would agree with Feynman that, regardless of what theory of nature we wish to espouse, we cannot escape the obligation to support our claims with objective evidence. *All* theories must conform to the facts or be discarded. So, if Weil cannot produce credible evidence to validate the miraculous cures that he claims for the healing powers of the mind, and if he does not support with objective data the claims he and others make for the effectiveness of alternative healing methods, he cannot presume to wear the mantle of science, and his appeal to quantum theory cannot help him.

Some apologists for alternative medicine have argued that since their healing methods are based on a "paradigm" different from that of traditional medicine, traditional standards of evidence do not apply. Weil sometimes seems to agree with that view, as when he talks about "stoned thinking" and the "ambivalent" nature of reality, but more recently—as he seeks to integrate alternative with allopathic medicine—he seems to acknowledge the need for objective evidence. This, at least, is how I would interpret one of his most recent and ambitious publishing ventures, the editorship of the new quarterly journal *Integrative Medicine.*

Integrative Medicine describes itself as a "peer-reviewed journal . . . committed to gathering evidence for the safety and efficacy of all approaches to health according to the highest standards of scientific research, while remaining open to new paradigms and honoring the healing power of nature." The Associate Editors and Editorial Board include prominent names in both alternative medicine and allopathic medicine, who presumably support that mission. Yet the first two issues will disappoint those who were looking for original clinical research based on new, objective data. Perhaps subsequent issues will be different, but in any case it is hard to understand the need for Weil's new journal if he truly intends to hold manuscripts to accepted scientific standards: there already exist many leading peer-reviewed medical journals that will review research studies of alternative healing methods on their merits. During the past decade or so, only a few such studies have passed rigorous review and have been published in first-rate journals.

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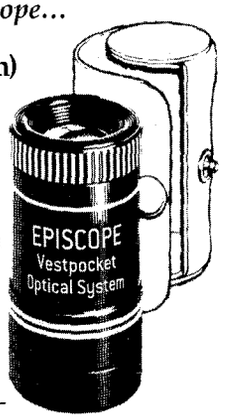

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Recently, more studies have been published, but very few of them report significant clinical effects. And that is pretty much where matters now stand. Despite much avowed interest in research on alternative medicine and increased investment in support of such research, the evidentiary underpinnings of unconventional healing methods are still largely lacking.

V.

Health and Healing, published in 1983, was the last of Weil's comprehensive and broadly conceived commentaries on health and disease. Beginning in 1995, with *Natural Health, Natural Medicine*, he produced a series of three "how-to" manuals on wellness and self-care, which established his current reputation as the people's doctor and "America's most trusted medical expert." The next was *Spontaneous Healing*, and the third *Eight Weeks to Optimum Health*.

These volumes follow the familiar, commercially tested patterns of health care manuals by offering their readers "proven programs" for achieving health and warding off disease. Advice on nutrition, herbal therapy, lifestyle, and environmental modifications, plus suggestions for psychological self-help, are liberally interspersed with anecdotes and testimonials about patients who are alleged to have achieved dramatic—sometimes apparently miraculous—results through the use of the recommended methods. The recommendations range from commonsensical, generally accepted, and medically sound advice on nutrition and modification of lifestyle to odd, almost bizarre recommendations that have nothing more than Weil's confident assurances and putative "experience" to back them up. Statements are usually made about the curative or preventive powers of some food or herb or healing practice, without the citation of any published evidence. Recipes abound, as do step-by-step guides for certain ritualistic health practices. The rituals and meditations contribute a quasi-religiosity to these practices, which undoubtedly enhance their appeal. All of this is pretty familiar stuff in the self-help medical literature, but Weil manages to make it dramatic and fresh enough to attract vast numbers of followers.

The most recent of Weil's publications is *Ask Dr. Weil*, a compilation of questions and answers that have appeared on his website. To judge from the range of questions and the confidence with which they are answered, Weil considers himself an authority on almost every field in medicine. Like his previous books, it includes strong, unqualified recommendations for unlikely and totally unproven remedies, such as massive intravenous doses of Vitamin C to hasten the healing of surgical wounds, and homeopathic medicines and hypnotherapy for the treatment of lupus. It also includes perfectly sensible advice about diet, exercise, and stress reduction that would be given by almost any competent medical practitioner and would find abundant support in the standard medical literature.

In addition to his books, other channels for the dissemination of Weil's medical wisdom include audiocassettes and compact discs on such subjects as "Eight Meditations for Optimum Health" and "Sound Body, Sound Mind: Music for Healing with Andrew Weil, M.D." His influence is also spread through videotapes of lectures and seminars, and appearances on television shows such as "Larry King Live." Even when compared with the ballyhoo surrounding the other icons of alternative medicine, the marketing success of "Andrew Weil, M.D." is extraordinary. To understand it, one has to appreciate the synergistic interaction between the special talents of the man and the current momentum of the alternative medicine movement.

The alternative medicine movement has been around for a long time, but it was eclipsed during most of this century by the success of medical science. Now there is growing public disenchantment with the cost and the impersonality of modern medical care, as well as concern about medical mistakes and the complications and side-effects of pharmaceuticals and other forms of medical treatment. For their part, physicians have allowed the public to perceive them as uninterested in personal problems, as inaccessible to their patients except when carrying out technical procedures and surgical operations. The "doctor knows best" attitude, which dominated patient-doctor relations during most of the century, has in recent decades given way to a more activist, consumer-oriented view of the patient's role. Moreover, many other licensed health-care professionals, such as nurse-practitioners, psychotherapists, pharmacists, and chiropractors, are providing services once exclusively reserved to allopathic physicians.

The net result of all these developments has been a weakening of the hegemony that allopathic medicine once exercised over the health care system, and a growing interest by the public in exploring other healing approaches. The authority of allopathic medicine is also being challenged by a swelling current of mysticism and anti-scientism that runs deep through our culture. Even as the number and the complexity of urgent technological and scientific issues facing contemporary society increase, there seems to be a growing public distrust of the scientific outlook and a reawakening of interest in mysticism and spiritualism.

All this obscurantism has given powerful impetus to the alternative medicine movement, with its emphasis on the power of mind over matter. And so consumer demand for alternative remedies is rising, as is public and private financial support for their study and clinical use. It is no wonder that practicing physicians, the academic medical establishment, and the National Institutes of Health are all finding reasons to pay more attention to the alternative medicine movement. Indeed, it is becoming politically incorrect for the movement's critics to express their skepticism too strongly in public.

Weil would seem at first to be ideally suited to be a leader of the alternative medicine movement at this juncture. He is articulate, self-assured, intellectually nimble—and wonderfully ambiguous. Ambiguity, after all, should be helpful to those who would defend systems of healing that are based on irrational or non-existent theories and are supported by no credible empirical evidence. But Weil wants to do more than to defend and to advocate the use of alternative healing. He wants to reform the medical establishment. His goal, he says, is to change the "paradigm" of medicine by integrating alternative methods and modes of thought into the teachings and practice of mainstream medicine. That is his declared mission at the University of Arizona College of Medicine.

He seems to believe that he is qualified to accomplish this great reform because he has no difficulty in arguing on both sides of the debate between alternative and traditional healing. In an interview he gave last year, when asked whether he sometimes feels torn between his traditional medical training at Harvard and the new alternatives, Weil replied: "I really think I'm in the middle. Sometimes I'm attacking traditional medicine, sometimes I'm defending it; sometimes I'm defending alternative medicine and sometimes attacking it, so I think I'm pretty even-handed in my criticism. I'm unique in that I'm not aligned with any one school of thought." That may be how Weil really thinks about himself and his "integrative" approach, but on close examination his position makes little sense. He cannot have the argument both ways.

As Weil clearly points out in his earlier books, alternative healing is based on a

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conception of nature and a theory of learning the truth about nature that is fundamentally at odds with the "straight," evidence-based thinking of mainstream medicine. As defined by Weil, and by most of the other gurus of alternative medicine, alternative and mainstream medicine are not simply different methods of treating illness. They are basically incompatible views of reality and how the material world works, and they cannot easily be combined into any rational and coherent "integrated" curriculum.

Is there an objective real world out there, of which human bodies are a part? If so, how do we learn about it? How do we determine whether a method of healing is effective or not? Do we follow the universal rule of science, as explained by Feynman, that objective, verifiable observation is the ultimate and final judge of the truth of an idea, or do we use the subjective methods advocated by the alternative medicine gurus and described by Weil in his "Stonesville" chapter? Without agreement on such basic issues, it is hard to know what Weil means by being "even-handed" in dealing with the two types of medical practice. Sometimes he seems to believe in the primacy of objective evidence and talks like a scientist, but more often he does not. This is inconsistency and confusion, not even-handedness. It is hardly a useful basis for the "new paradigm" of "integrative medicine" that Weil is promoting.

There is no doubt that modern medicine as it is now practiced needs to improve its relations with patients, and that some of the criticisms leveled against it by people such as Weil—and by many more within the medical establishment itself—are valid. There also can be no doubt that a few of the "natural" medicines and healing methods now being used by practitioners of alternative medicine will prove, after testing, to be safe and effective. This, after all, has been the way in which many important therapeutic agents and treatments have found their way into standard medical practice in the past. Mainstream medicine should continue to be open to the testing of selected unconventional treatments. In keeping an open mind, however, the medical establishment in this country must not lose its scientific compass or weaken its commitment to rational thought and the rule of evidence.

There are not two kinds of medicine, one conventional and the other unconventional, that can be practiced jointly in a new kind of "integrative medicine." Nor, as Andrew Weil and his friends also would have us believe, are there two kinds of thinking, or two ways to find out which treatments work and which do not. In the best kind of medical practice, all proposed treatments must be tested objectively. In the end, there will only be treatments that pass that test and those that do not, those that are proven worthwhile and those that are not. Can there be any reasonable "alternative"? •

The Flying Trapezius

By James Wood

A Man in Full by Tom Wolfe

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 742 pp., $28.95)

Tom Wolfe's novels are placards of simplicity. His characters are capable of experiencing only one feeling at a time, as British faucets only gush separately with hot and cold water. They are advertisements for the self: Greed! Fear! Hate! Love! Misery! The people who phosphoresce thus are nothing like real people. They are instead big, vivid blots of typology: The Overweaning Property Developer! His Divorced First Wife! His Sexy Young Trophy Wife! The Well-Dressed Black Lawyer Who Speaks Too White! The Oafish Football Player! They race through huge, twisted plots, their adventures hammered out in a banging and brassy prose. Wolfe's writing follows American life like a kind of shoulder to the country's highway, loyally coterminous with its flares and its crashes. His melodramatic fiction resembles an opera libretto written by a frustrated novelist who has exceeded his commission.

What is so curious is that Wolfe thinks his fiction is realistic, and has used it as an example of how the American novel should develop. In 1989 he wrote a bouncy manifesto called "Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast," in which he championed "a highly-detailed realism based

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on reporting," like that of his own novel *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, which had appeared two years earlier. He complained that too few novelists were interested "in the metropolis or any other big, rich slices of contemporary life," and had abandoned realism for what he called "literary games," minimalism, or various sterile, white-coated avant-gardisms. Only by vigorously going out and reporting on American society could one bring it back and wrestle it into the novel. Zola had done this with French society when he went on his "documentation" trips, and Sinclair Lewis had done this with America in the 1920s and '30s. It is reportorial detail that makes novels "engrossing" and "gripping" and "moving," said Wolfe—"the *petits faits vrais* that create verisimilitude and make a novel gripping or absorbing." This is the modern novel's gift to us, its sentimental education, which we can see in Dickens or in *Anna Karenina*. "No one was ever moved to tears by reading about the unhappy fates of heroes and heroines in Homer, Sophocles, Molière, Racine, Sydney [sic], Spenser, or Shakespeare," Wolfe catechizes in a remarkable sentence. But when Little Nell dies in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, everyone cries.

It is a curiously unliterary mind that has never been strongly moved by a Greek tragedy, let alone a Shakespearean one; and it is an orphaned realism that not only excludes, but actually sets itself against, Shakespearean character. (Who is more Dickensian than Falstaff?) But Wolfe's essay is not really a response to American literature so much as a response to American film; and it is in turn not a literary response but a filmic one. For contemporary American fiction has not been at all negligent in its realist duties. Perhaps a little avant-garde starvation occurred in the 1960s, but since then we have had John Updike's suburban sediments, John Irving's infantile robustness, Richard Ford's New Jersey real estate, Robert Stone's racy, piratical worldliness. Philip Roth has become Newark's archivist. What was *Underworld* but an old-fashioned Dickensian novel about the bomb? There is far too much realism in American fiction; it has become an idle liberty.

Wolfe's essay reads as if he were not so much goaded by the failure in realism of American fiction as piqued by the success in realism of American cinema. One deduces this from his solution, which is entirely cinematic: go out, fill up your notebook, and then uncomplicatedly stuff all this reality into the novel. (Shoot and then don't edit.) Treat language as if it were a neutral saturate, like light, and use it as the Hollywood hooligan uses it, to illuminate his melodrama. Like the commercial film director, Wolfe does not realize that his gaudy storytelling is mannered or sensational. He thinks that it is realistic, because life is gaudy; he is like a man with a very loud voice who thinks he speaks like everyone else. Thus although many writers have filled notebooks with "documentation," Wolfe prefers the cruder and more sensational examples of rewarded diligence, such as Zola and Sinclair Lewis, writers it is now hard to reread. Flaubert copiously documented the agricultural show that appears in *Madame Bovary*, and Thomas Mann, while planning *The Magic Mountain*, visited the sanatorium his wife was staying in. And Joyce.... But Wolfe never mentions these more literary writers, because they demonstrate that what is done on the page with the *petits faits vrais*—their intellectual compression, the writerly theft that is meted out on them—is more important than their borrowed rawness. Wolfe is not in search of realism; he wants hot, brothy journalism.

TOM WOLFE BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

And all this would be barely worth articulating were Wolfe not now floating on a sea of smiles, with the press garlanding him as Dickens's heir. The *Washington Post* thinks his new novel is "tough, demanding, uncompromising stuff," that it "calls to mind the work of Dickens" and gets "to the innermost human soul." *Newsweek* says: "Right now, no writer—reporter or novelist—is getting it [America] on paper better than Tom Wolfe," while *Time* quivers that "no summary of *A Man in Full* can do justice to the novel's ethical nuances." *The New York Times* judges Wolfe to have written "passages as powerful and as beautiful as anything written not merely by contemporary American novelists but by any American novelist." So it seems worth explaining that the gap between *Anna Karenina* and *A Man in Full* is not merely one of talent, but of genre: a fountain against an aerosol spray. Wolfe's novels are only crudely like Dickens's, since they are not literary. Despite their bulk and their immense twisted colons of plot, their ambition is the management of simplification. But one of literature's ambitions is the surveillance of complexity.

By "realism," Wolfe means the recognizable. His characters are types: each is a special edition of generalities. The hero of the novel's title, for example, is a tediously obvious and uncomplex type: Charlie Croker is a Southern, loutish, macho property developer who has fallen upon hard times. A former college football star, he is powerfully built and brutishly charismatic. Now sixty, he has divorced Martha, his long-serving wife, and married Serena, a lithe twenty-eight-year-old. He is one of the big men who has built Atlanta, where the novel is set.

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He dislikes his sensitive son Wally. He bullies his way through life, throwing off racist and homophobic remarks. When his financial empire begins to collapse, he reacts as you would expect him to, belligerently. Only toward the end of the novel do his anxieties about the money he owes force him into an apparent surrender which is actually a spiritual triumph. Until this moment of spiritual reversal—which seems an inadvertence on Wolfe's part, something absurdly rushed in an attempt to end the novel—Charlie Croker never says anything surprising or interesting or eccentric or meaningful or beautiful or even especially funny in the entire book. When you expect him to be angry, he is angry. When you expect him to be sad, he is sad. He is proud of exactly the useless baubles you would expect such a man to be proud of. He has no interesting or touching secrets, except his weakness, which is not interesting because it is exactly the kind of weakness such blustering men are commonly expected to have. He is a cartoonish sliver of a man, as flat as a wafer.

Atlanta in the 1990s is a forest of typologies, all of them swaying in Wolfe's gale-force prose. Around Charlie Croker sways the venomous Harry Zale, of PlannersBanc, who is determined to retrieve the money his firm has lent to Charlie. Elsewhere in the city, Fareek Fanon, a black football player for Georgia Tech, has been accused of raping Elizabeth Armholster, the daughter of one of Atlanta's richest and most powerful men, Inman Armholster. The shrewd black mayor, fearful that this story will tear the city apart, decides to try to get the famous Charlie Croker, who once played for Georgia Tech, to say a few public words on Fareek's behalf. The mayor uses as his courier Roger White, a suave black lawyer, who dresses fabulously but is afraid of seeming too white, as his college nickname, Roger Too White, reminds him. (All Wolfe's characters have one big anxiety or flaw, the kind that has been squeezed again and again by the media, and is therefore recognizable to readers. Martha is the Divorced Businessman's Wife; Roger White is the Successful Black Sell-Out; the Mayor is the Unscrupulous Black Strategist; Fareek is the Black Athlete As Sexual Menace.) Meanwhile, in California, a young man called Conrad Hensley is working for Croker Global Foods. One day, his path will cross with Charlie's, and he will change Charlie's life for the better....

But none of these people are individuals. They are all chosen from society's catalog. Even the minor characters are typological. Wolfe cannot help registering this knowingness at the verbal level: "Buck McNutter was a prototypical Southern white boy." Or two policemen, "real country boys, the raw-boned kind who liked to get drunk on Saturday night and go down to the railroad grade crossing and have a rock fight." A mean lawyer: "The man seemed to have only two expressions: Indignation and Contempt." (Well, that certainly makes his fictional representation easy!) One of Charlie's hands at his Georgia plantation: "Every time Charlie saw this big man and heard his deep Baker County voice, he just knew that he was the archetype of what the overseers had been back when overseers rode hard." Or Kenny, one of Charlie's employees in California: "He was one of those raw-boned young California Okies, to use the local term for Redneck." Or Fareek Fanon: "You could see the dense muscles and cable-like tendons of the real ghetto boy." Or Inman Armholster: "He's a sort of fat white man who exists only in Georgia." Or Charlie's Chief Financial Officer: "The sunken cheeks and stringy neck peculiar to compulsive joggers." Wolfe is, as it were, always writing that someone is "prototypical," or that he is "the kind of man who," or "the archetype of," or "the sort of."

Well, Wolfe has certainly been out to

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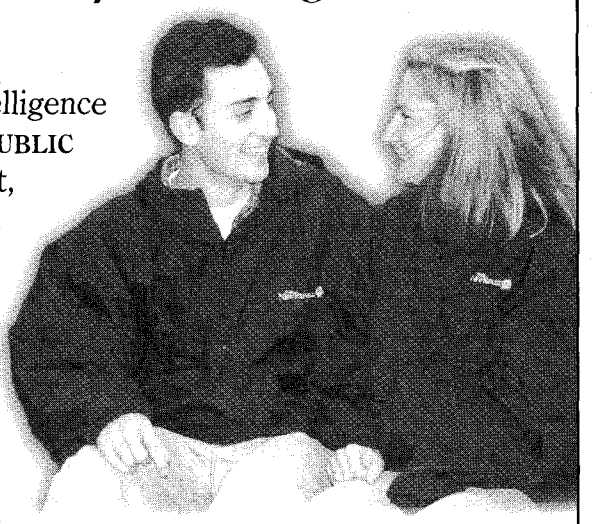

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collect his *petits faits vrais*. And look—they are rows and rows of spangled typicalities:

> She had Black Deb written all over her. Her parents were no doubt the classic Black Professional couple of the 1990s, in Charlotte or Raleigh or Washington or Baltimore. Look at the gold bangles on her wrists; must have cost hundreds of dollars. Look at the soft waves in her relaxed hair, a 'do known as a *Bout en Train* ... probably went to Howard or maybe Chapel Hill or the University of Virginia; belonged to Theta Psi.

"She had Black Deb written all over her." In fact, it is Wolfe who has "written all over her," so that she is covered, like a billboard, with the advertisements of her type.

As if Wolfe is aware of these dangers, he tries to agitate his typology by making his characters physical gargoyles in a pseudo-Dickensian manner. He may also have studied Saul Bellow's tough-hided externals. Thus many of his men are vast, outsize physical specimens, bursting out of their clothes. It is the principle that the quickest way to make somebody interesting is to make him physically eccentric. So his men are gargantuan. There is Buck McNutter, the Georgia Tech coach: "His neck, which seemed a foot wide, rose up out of a yellow polo shirt and a blue blazer as if it were unit-welded to his trapezius muscles and his shoulders. He was like a single solid slab of meat clear up to his hair, which was a head of hair and a half, a strange silvery blond color, coiffed with bouncy fullness and little flips that screamed $65 male hairdo." Five hundred pages later, this is almost exactly how Wolfe describes the massive Charlie Croker, when Roger White meets him for the first time: "His neck, trapezius muscles, shoulders, and chest seemed to be a single unit-welded mass." Then there is the hugely fat Inman Armholster, and there is the Mayor's chauffeur: "The man was a tank. His shirt-collar size must have been twenty at least." And a giant of a man who works for a tow-truck company: "a regular giant, 250 pounds if he was an ounce. The sleeves of his shirt had been cut off at the shoulders, revealing his huge fleshy arms." And Durwood, who works for Charlie at the plantation: "His head and neck were huge ... his beefy shoulders ... his immense forearms."

It is Wolfe's typology—his ideal of reportorial fidelity—that pushes him into melodramatic exaggeration. On the one hand, Wolfe gets the facts, harnesses America's sociological tides; and on the other hand, in reaction to the prosaic factuality of his information, his people are teased into grotesquerie, to make them more than merely typical. But then they are just grotesquely typical. What they fail to be is individual. They are skins only, pithless. Rushing to shiny extremes of characterization, Wolfe always neglects the subtly glamorous median. The *Los Angeles Times*, in a generally negative review, conceded that Wolfe's characters, "like Dickens's, are to a greater or lesser degree grotesques." But Wolfe's people are unlike Dickens's in every important literary respect. Dickens's grotesques are not recognizable but unrecognizable and strange. Wolfe's prose always prefers the most ordinary, the most vulgar word. His descriptions are always the most ordinary details, without any capacity for simile or metaphor (which is one of the absolute definitions of the literary). But Dickens finds the unexpected detail, the vivid simile. Think of Joe Gargery in *Great Expectations*, "with eyes of such a very undecided blue that they seemed to have somehow got mixed with their own whites." Or, in *David Copperfield*, Dora's cousin "in the Life-Guards, with such long legs that he looked like the afternoon shadow of somebody else." Or Uriah Heep in the same novel, his mouth "open like a post-office." Or Mr. Trabb, who "had sliced his hot roll into three feather beds, and was slipping butter in between the blankets, and covering it up." The delight of such wit has little to do, at times, with accuracy; a mouth never really looks like a post-office. The joy, the literary joy, is in the local fizz of each detail, and in the relation of each detail to the other, and then in the moral revelation that such similes provide. (Uriah Heep is like a post-office, that is, he is everyone's willing courier.)

Literature is not always like life. Why should it be? Sometimes the real itself is not always realistic, because it is incredible. Dickens used to walk in a cemetery at Cooling where could be found a grave with thirteen little siblings, all of them from the same family, all of whom had died as children. When he stole this grave for the cemetery scene at the beginning of *Great Expectations*, he reduced the number of dead children to a less sensational five. What is good "documentation," good reporting, may be lousy literature. And there is another way, of course, in which the heavy documentation of detail is not necessarily realistic: it is not through documentation that most of us absorb or present or remember detail. We do not boil in a fever of *petits faits vrais*, we shiver in the cool temperature of particulars.

But Wolfe's characters are always presented to us as tumuli of data, and, oddly, they appraise one another like this. The description of the young woman who "had Black Deb written all over her" is actually seen through the eyes of Roger White, the smart black lawyer, who is watching her dancing in the street. Perhaps Roger White, who is conscious of status, might be just the man to flood the young woman in sociological detail; but he is more likely to have noticed something odd about her ears. When Levin, in *Anna Karenina*, nervously runs to the doctor to bring him to his wife, who has begun labor, he does not, as a Wolfean character would do, build an obtuse observational jigsaw for us—say, the fashionable street the doctor lives in, his trapezius muscles, his obviously cheap haircut, his eau de cologne from Paris (rue Diderot), his shirt from the well-known shirtmaker Pavel Suvorin in St. Petersburg. No, in his beautifully clumsy male anxiety, his first-time father's mistaken belief that his wife is about to give birth at any moment and that the doctor is being horribly slow, Levin fixates on the "thick cigarettes" that the doctor insists on smoking before leaving his house. The thick cigarettes make literature. In the whole of *A Man in Full*, there is nothing like those thick cigarettes. But then, such details are generally imagined, not doggedly "documented."

The kind of "realism" called for by Wolfe—and by Zola or Ibsen—is always realism about society and never realism about human emotions, motives, and secrecies. To be realistic about feeling is to acknowledge that we may feel several things at once, that we massively waver. This is Shakespeare's realism—Shakespeare, who has never moved Tom Wolfe—that he sees how eloquently unfinished our inner lives are, how disappointed we are about the stories we tell, and how private and unknowable are our tragedies and comedies—or rather our tragi-comedies, for a realism about emotion acknowledges that human stories are always junctions of difference, never merely one thing or the other.

But Wolfe's characters have only their hide-like simplicities. Charlie Croker is clearly modeled in part on Robert Maxwell, the British entrepreneur and newspaper owner, who died in mysterious circumstances, leaving his financial empire in tatters and some of his employees penniless. At one point in the book, Charlie recalls Robert Maxwell, and considers "disappearing" like Maxwell. But Charlie's cartoonish simplicity, his depthlessness as a fictional character, is only made more acute by reflection on a real tycoon like Maxwell. Like Croker, Maxwell seemed cartoonish. He was huge, and brutal, and coarse. But just *because*

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he was cartoonish, we know that Maxwell was much more complicated than a cartoon: Maxwell, who was Jewish, who was born in Czechoslovakia, who made himself into an unconvincing English gentleman, who was a tyrant but who was apparently loved by two loyal sons, who was a capitalist but who was known as a leftist and who published Ceaucescu's memoirs and fawning biographies of Mao. Maxwell had many interesting contradictions. Croker has none. He is only the bigoted, "prototypical" Southern businessman, as caricatural on the inside as on the outside.

At least Wolfe's characters have vivid inner lives. About the only interesting aspect of his fiction is that Wolfe has a rather finely old-fashioned commitment to the stream-of-consciousness, the interior monologue. Wolfe devotes whole pages to the drifting internal anxieties of his characters, and sometimes, by dint of sheer perseverance, by sticking with a character's train of thought, a weak power is transmitted. (The same applies to Wolfe's perseverance with speech, and with rendering slang and dialect phonetically. Sometimes the reportage is so good, the rendition so faithful, and the speech so strange, that a genuine power flickers on the page. A scene set in a California prison draws strength from Wolfe's painstaking and undaunted determination to capture the talk of the black inmates.)

Unfortunately, Wolfe's characters only feel one emotion at a time; their inner lives are like jingles for the self. As Picasso had his Blue Period, so Wolfe's characters have their Angry Period, or their Horny Period, or their Sad Period. But they never have them at the same time, and so the potential flexibility of the stream-of-consciousness, precisely its lifelike randomness, is nullified. The reader finds his eyes continually skipping to the end of each long patch of interior monologue, because he knows that its garish unity will be boring. And because these people think only one emotion, they feel their emotions very robustly, all the time. All the stream-of-consciousness in this book is excitable and melodramatic in the same way, regardless of who is thinking it, with screeching italics and arrow-showers of exclamation points, and ellipses like hysterical Morse code. Thus the great novelistic tool of individuality, the stream-of-consciousness, ends up demonstrating, in Wolfe's fiction, that everyone is the same. Everyone is scrawled with the same inner graffiti. On one of the earliest pages of the book, Charlie Croker blusters to himself about his wife's rudeness: "Why, the ...

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What are the facts?

Land for Peace. The whole concept is absurd. Never in the history of the world has any nation returned lands to those who have attacked it. Even so, in line with the Camp David accord, Israel has yielded the vast Sinai to Egypt. It has yielded Gaza and about 40% of the "West Bank" to the Palestinians. Over 90% of the Arab population of the territories is under the control of the Palestinian Authority. What else is expected of a country that occupies only a fraction of 1% of the lands occupied by the Arabs? And shouldn't land for peace work both ways? Shouldn't the Arabs give up some land to get peace? Or why not just simply "peace for peace"?

A Palestinian State. Israel could not survive if Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") were in unfriendly hands. There can be little question of the enduring hostility of the Arabs. The "West Bank" mountain ridges dominate the narrow waist of Israel, in which over 70% of the Jewish population, 80% of its industrial base, and the most important military installations are located. The Palestinians would not need an army to make life in Israel impossible. Moveable Katyusha rockets would dominate the area. Israel needs to keep strategic control of the "West Bank," without which it would not be defensible.

Return of the "Refugees". Population transfers have occurred throughout history. In 1945, the resettlement of 3 million Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia was arranged. Following the collapse of its North African empire, France accepted close to 1.5 million people. More than 12 million(!) Muslims and Hindus were exchanged between India and Pakistan. Israel has recognized this historical necessity. But the "Arab Nation", with its enormous wealth and vast under-populated lands, has stubbornly refused to face facts. Instead of allowing the Palestinians who left Israel in 1948 (and their descendants) to be integrated into their societies, they have, for the past fifty years, kept them in miserable "refugee camps" and have encouraged them to plot vengeance and terrorism. Return of these people to Israel, including the "West Bank" is impossible. Neither Israel nor any Palestinian entity could absorb them. There is not enough land and not enough water. It would be as unthinkable as for those 3 million Germans to return to Poland and the Czech republic or, for that matter, for the 800,000 Jews who fled or were expelled from the Arab countries to return to their original homes.

> "By not yielding to pressure and by not allowing Israel to be strategically weakened, Mr. Netanyahu will bring peace with security, *shalom batuach,* to Israel and to the entire Middle East."

Jerusalem. Before the end of the 1967 Six-Day War, no claims to Jerusalem being a Moslem holy city or the capital of any Arab country were asserted. But for over two thousand years, Jews have been living in Jerusalem and they have been the majority population since the 19th century. Why should they give up their capital, their holy city as far back as memory goes—or even any part of it? The Moslems have their holy cities, Mecca and Medina, and they have 22 Arab capitals. There are important Arab cities in the "West Bank," under full control of the Palestinian Authority. But Jerusalem is the eternal and indivisible capital of the Jewish State.

These are the most important issues that Netanyahu and his government will have to confront in the final status talks. As to Jewish "settlements" in the "West Bank": Jews have the right to live in any part of the land of Israel. And why not? How could 160,000 Jews living among 1 million Arabs in the "West Bank" be an obstacle to peace if over 1 million Arabs live within the "green line" of Israel? Nobody considers them an obstacle to peace. By not yielding to pressure from any source, and by not allowing Israel to be strategically weakened, Mr. Netanyahu will be true to his campaign promise and will bring peace with security, *shalom batuach,* to Israel and to the entire Middle East.

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62

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the . . . the . . . the . . . *impudence* of it!" Yet two hundred pages later, his ex-wife, Martha, is sitting at a concert and thinking angrily about her ex-husband in exactly the same language:

> She had—had—had—had—well—*created!*—the Charlie Croker the world had come to know—and now after three decades, he had the audacity—the *audacity!*—to shuck her, to cast her off like any old piece of worn-out baggage, as if she had been merely lucky enough to come along for the great ride, as if *he* had introduced *her* to all the wonders of the Buckhead life rather than the other way around!

The delicacy of stream-of-consciousness is that it both discloses the movement of the mind and also gestures to what cannot be said, to what is unrepresentable; it is the soul's stutter. Wolfe may think that he is capturing some sort of mental stutter with his buffoonish "Why the . . . the . . . the . . . the," but of course the very facility of this convention, and the fact that it is spread evenly among all the characters, suggests the opposite. It announces a complacency about how the writer captures the brokenness of thought. Wolfe says, in effect: here, this is how you do it, by repeating the definite or indefinite article four times, and tattooing some ellipses all over the page. In the process of apparently announcing the strenuousness of his realism, he in fact proclaims its easy conventionality.

Who, then, is playing what Wolfe calls "literary games"? Borges, whom he disdains in "Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast," or Wolfe himself? Borges made literary games so beautifully that they are not games. Wolfe's unbeautiful, entirely ordinary "realism" is just a flat game that has forgotten it is a game. In life, no one actually thinks to himself, "Why the . . . the . . . the . . . the . . . *impudence* of it!" Wolfe's realism, veering between the typologically drab and the monstrously melodramatic, is a set of unreal devices, in which people breathe "stertorously," and think in conveniently spaced ellipses, and have two-page daydreams from which they are always jerked by the reality around them with a neat dash: "Oh, he felt—Just then a burst of static. . . ." The acceptance of this kind of writing as literature is dangerous not because anybody will confuse it with life, will think "this is what life is like," but because readers may read it and think "this is what literature is like." That this bumptious simplicity, this toy-set of literary codes essentially indistinguishable from the narrative techniques of boys' comics, would call itself realism, and then be praised for its "unsparing" brutality, its capacity to reach the "innermost soul" of the human being, is an awful contemporary deformation, quite worthy of our appalled "documentation." But not by Tom Wolfe, please. •

The Untrustworthy

BY ROY PORTER

In Defense of History by Richard J. Evans

(Norton, 250 pp., $25.95)

Tales from the German Underworld by Richard J. Evans

(Yale University Press, 278 pp., $35)

Over the last twenty years Richard J. Evans has established himself as perhaps the most erudite, the most innovative, and the most prolific of our historians of Germany. Back in the 1970s, almost before feminist history was launched, he undertook a pioneering exploration of women's emancipation in the Reich. Since then he has also enlarged our understanding of the German working class and its politics. *In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past* (1989) assessed the soul-searchings of German scholars attempting to come to terms with Hitler and the Holocaust. *Death in Hamburg: Society and Politics in the Cholera Years* (1987) was a truly magisterial analysis of the politics of pestilence during the final great European cholera outbreak. For sheer ambition, however, nothing he has written rivals *Rituals of Retribution* (1996), a vast canvas of the theory and the practice of capital punishment in Germany over the last three centuries.

Ranging effortlessly from feminism to the Führer, Evans has displayed a remarkable range, a nose for the archives, a taste for controversy, and a fluent pen. And now he has produced another brace of books. One, *In Defense of History*, casts a critical eye over the practice of history today, and offers directives as to how it should be done; the other, *Tales from the German Underworld*, affords the reader the chance to judge how far Evans practices what he preaches.

You might suppose that the last thing that needs defending these days is history. Aren't we all wallowing in the past? Just think of the popularity of all those Jane Austen and Henry James movies. But this would be to miss the point of Evans's book, which is to vindicate history as an academic discipline in pursuit of solid knowledge. There is much to praise about history today, he concedes. Most importantly, the discipline has cast off its blinkers. Time was when it was largely about kings and battles, or at least about dead white male elites; but these days it encompasses everyone and everything, and cultivates all manner of approaches. "At the end of the twentieth century," he enthuses, "historians are writing about almost every conceivable kind of human activity in the past, as well as about animals, plants, the natural environment and the built and constructed world of machines and human habitations—and much more besides."

So whence the threats? Who, in Evans's view, are the enemies? For a start, there are history's false friends, those who profess history but do it badly. Muddled thinking particularly riles him, and much of his book is devoted to attempts to unravel the old tangles that have trapped historians ever since Herodotus. Is history made by human agency, or is it just the tide of impersonal forces? Is the course of affairs inevitable, or do chance and accident play their part? Should the discipline of history be seen as an art or a science? On these and other issues, Evans has assembled an entertaining gallery of silly pontifications.

Evans also seeks to defend history from the zealots within its own ranks, especially those who believe, rather like Casaubon in *Middlemarch*, that it has fallen to them to reveal the grand arcanum of human affairs. Evans is not a master-key man. Thus he breaks a lance with Marxists obsessed with class and more generally with economic determinism, and he likewise takes issue with the self-styled cliometricians who are convinced that the master-key lies in crunching numbers.

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"History that is not quantifiable," dogmatized Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie back in the 1970s, "cannot claim to be scientific. Tomorrow's historian will have to be able to program a computer in order to survive." Fortunately he proved a poor prophet, as historians usually do.

After debunking the dunces, the dogmatists, and the other false friends, Evans turns to history's enemies. They are the postmodernists. If it is the historian's business to dig into the sources to discover the truth, it is the postmodernists' creed, according to Evans, that this is a spurious enterprise. There is no such thing as the past, they maintain; there are only synchronic and diachronic discursive modalities—or, to dispense with the jargon, "the past" is just a trope, a rhetorical conceit, an ideological invention. Moreover, there is no such thing as the truth. All that we possess are signs in texts; and the notion of an extratextual, pre-interpreted reality, is a shallow, old, empiricist fallacy.

For the postmodernists, history must be regarded as a variety of fiction, or, in Barthes's words, "a parade of signifiers masquerading as a collection of facts." Hence, they tell us, one must speak not of objectivity, but of the "truth effect." "There are no grounds to be found in the record itself for preferring one way of construing its meaning rather than another," wrote Hayden White, the pope of historiographical postmodernism. And from such conclusions it follows, according to two other American academics, Ellen Somekawa and Elizabeth Smith, that "all interpretations are equally valid."

Originally formulated by thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, these disturbing views, Evans fears, have now filtered down to textbooks and methodological primers for students. In two such works, *Rethinking History* (1991) and *On "What is History"* (1995), the English historian Keith Jenkins thus denounces what he calls the "fetishism of documents" typical of old-hat history, and bluntly declares: "history is theory and theory is ideological and ideology just is material interests." In other words, anything goes. The postmodernist may not like to be lumped with Henry Ford, but for him, too, history is bunk.

These, then, are the enemies against whom Evans has raised his standard. And the destructive postmodernist doctrines—history is just a text, there is no objective knowledge about the past, one interpretation is as good as another—are not just academic affectations; they may be pernicious also in the real world. For, as Evans shows, they provide a foundation—an anti-foundational foundation, you might say—for every peddler of prejudice who seeks to suborn the past for his own purposes. They play straight into the hands of those, for example, who deny the Holocaust. Seizing upon the postmodernist slogan that "everything is writing," certain neo-Nazis have claimed that the Final Solution is just a fabrication of the Jewish propaganda machine, just another discursive site in the web of words.

The postmodernist critique, Evans forcefully argues, is just plain wrong. For historical truth is indeed attainable—not absolute truth, or truth for all time, but truth that carries a sufficient ring of probability—and that is all we expect even from natural science in these post-Popperian times. Naturally Evans does not deny that historical judgments are products of their times: there are as many discredited historical interpretations as there are falsified scientific theories. But that is precisely the point. Like science, history has its data pool and its rules of evidence; and historical research is conducted according to protocols of free inquiry and fair criticism which, however imperfectly, sift the wheat from the chaff and promote the advancement of learning.

And yet it is a shame that *In Defense of History* dwells so much upon refuting this particular syllabus of errors. For there is also good news to report. I would have appreciated a fuller appreciation of how the new "linguistic turn" has positively enriched the practice of history. Among other developments, the "new historicism," associated above all with Stephen Greenblatt, has led literary scholars to juxtapose poems, plays, and pamphlets in original and exciting ways against the documents that have been historians' stock-in-trade. Critics who used to cling to the literary canon now pore over Elizabethan witchcraft texts and broadsheets about cutpurses, with results that are stimulating for historians as well.

Yet finally Evans is not really animated by theory. He believes that the proof of the pudding must be in the eating: a historian's practice will reveal the value of a historian's thinking. And this is what, in part, is attempted in *Tales from the German Underworld*. In this more relaxed work, Evans displays all his customary mastery of the archives, but he puts his gleanings to uses which give the book a different flavor from *Rituals of Retribution* and his other monumental studies.

His new book presents four narratives of crime and punishment from nineteenth-century Germany. First, there are the epic adventures of an artist transported to Siberia after conviction for forging banknotes; then the tragic sufferings of a woman subjected to endless beatings by the Bremen authorities for the crime of repeatedly returning to the city after expulsion; then the fantastic frauds of a professional con man arrested for not paying his hotel bill; and finally the career of a young woman who drifted into prostitution after bearing a bastard. These stories are presented as instances of the "microstudy," a genre developed by Robert Darnton and Carlo Ginzburg and made famous by Natalie Zemon Davis's treatment of the life of Martin Guerre.

Evans sets his narratives against historical orthodoxy on the "modernization" of German society. Historians have insisted that it was in the nineteenth century that Prussia, followed by the other German states, finally implemented "enlightened despotism" through bureaucratic reforms and systematic police control. More broadly, Foucault's writings

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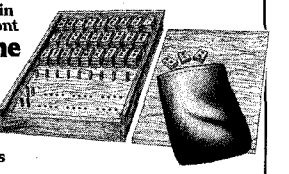

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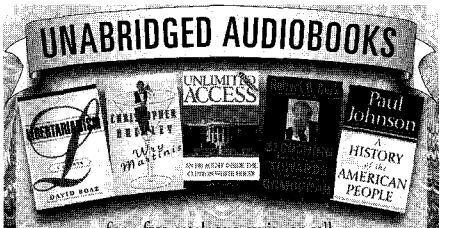

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on crime and punishment have maintained that the "tolerated illegalities" so characteristic of earlier epochs were finally being swept away and replaced by a "carceral society," realized through networks of controlling institutions and sustained by scientific government. By means of the modernization and the rationalization of power, the German state is supposed to have encased its subjects in an iron cage of conformity and obedience—an ominous inculcation of habits of submission to authority that were to have deadly consequences in the next century.

But these chronicles of the fates of individuals suggest to Evans that things were far more enigmatic than the Foucauldian reading suggests. However authoritarian the authorities wished to be, they had no agreed philosophy of punishment and no consensus as to what should actually be done with offenders. This becomes plain in the account of Wilhelm Aschenbrenner, the forger deported to Siberia along with a gang of "Prussia's most dangerous criminals." Britain had a penal colony in Australia, and France its Devil's Island; but Evans shows that transportation always remained for the Germans rather a makeshift, a desperate expedient. Prussia and some other German states did send convicts overseas, but this never became a general policy, and after 1850 it effectively ceased.

Doubts and debates about the value of another mode of punishment surface in Evans's second chapter, too: the story of Gesche Rudolph, the vagrant who fell foul of the Bremen authorities. The floggings and the canings meted out to her came under fire from liberals, who condemned them as brutal relics of feudalism and as symbols of authoritarian contempt for the individual. Public opinion was coming round to the view that corporal punishment was ineffective, and it was abolished in the wake of the revolutions of 1848—a move symptomatic of a long-term disappearance of official violence from the public sphere. Yet that reform, as Evans demonstrates, did not necessarily usher in the "civilized society" that the liberals trumpeted—not least because the policy of imprisonment that replaced it could easily be condemned as both inhumane and ineffectual.

Evans' third microstudy, from the 1860s, reveals how police interrogation of the confidence man Franz Ernst brought to light a life passed masquerading under an endless variety of false identities. Ernst's nefarious activities show how the mid-century political instability of the German states, and the climate of deception and counter-deception created by revolutionaries and the police's espionage department, provided golden opportunities for unscrupulous adventurers to flourish. Ernst's ability to deceive all and sundry, and to evade justice, exposes the inefficacy of the surveillance machinery that, according to the Foucauldians, provided the police with a vise-like instrument of social control.

The subject matter of Evans's final tale—the saga of Thymian Gotteball, the young woman who fell into a life of prostitution, recounted graphically in a diary discovered after her death—allows Evans to challenge another historical orthodoxy. German feminists have typecast prostitutes as plebeian victims of bourgeois male exploitation. They have also argued that controls over registered prostitutes created a totalitarian framework of rules and regulations. In Evans's judgment, however, this case, when put alongside what is known of the lives of other prostitutes, casts such readings into doubt. Prostitution was a traffic in which men and women from various social strata were involved; it should not be reduced to some simplistic model of class or gender exploitation. However wretched a whore's life might have been, there is ample evidence that at least some women found it preferable to the alternatives on offer.

In sum, the notion that a panoptic, carceral network of police and penal authorities was installed in nineteenth-century Germany turns out to be something of a myth. A far more profitable approach, Evans believes, would be to focus attention instead on the creation of images of the underworld, seen as society's way of fantasizing the deviant and the outcast. By the middle of the century, commentators were coming to portray such people as members of an organized criminal subculture with its own rules and its own dialect. Marx and Engels were to reshape it into the idea of the lumpenproletariat, and socialists exploited the concept in their bid to distinguish the "respectable" working classes, whom they championed, from the rabble.

By the *fin de siècle*, the infiltration of Social Darwinist thinking into theories of poverty and crime was encouraging the belief that the underworld was hereditary in nature, and few criminologists denied that lawlessness was at least partly the product of hereditary factors, triggered by influences such as alcoholism. It was left to the Nazis to add the racial element, and to consign its damned souls—Jews and gypsies, degenerates, criminals and perverts—to sterilization, concentration camps, and the gas chamber.

Irresistible

After the film *Un Coeur En Hiver*

No one ever has heard her subtleties
or mistakes as keenly,
has heard her the way
she most deeply hears herself,

so the brilliant, beautiful violinist
gives up her husband for the artisan
who repairs her violin. Character
on its way toward destiny,

my favorite kind of helplessness.
She loves his cold, uncompromising ear.
But he loves only violins
and small adjustments; he doesn't

desire her desire, or anyone's.
What she sees as affection
he means as fine work,
and the winter in his heart

must seem to her a climate
she can only improve. She persists—
a fool, an idiot, my intimate—
and the film slows

to him listening at a concert.
He smiles at Ravel played just right.
Afterward he isolates for her the precise
moment. It's what she can't resist.

He works for her husband,
but when he turns her away
that's not the reason.
That would have been understandable

and simply moral, and I wouldn't
have walked out into the welter
of lost causes, into the fraught air,
so happily implicated and encumbered.

Stephen Dunn

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Through the rich texture of his case-studies Evans thus shows how bourgeois society conjured up the underworld out of its own phobic imagination, to counterpoint its own proprieties. Underworld narratives sparked moral panics and fueled respectable fears. It will be amply clear from this how far the thinking shaping Evans's *Tales* has been enriched by the new historicism. There is also another borrowing that Evans has made, and that is in respect of his source materials and the uses he has put them to. For he is at pains to point out how his archival narratives of crime and punishment reflect and interact with the invention of criminal types in the culture at large, life imitating art while art mimics life. Thus his forger's autobiography—tellingly entitled *Aschenbrenner's Authentic History*—reproduces many of the motifs of the sensational literature of the day. Aschenbrenner's romantic narrative, with its implied message that a life of crime was a life of adventure, strikingly followed the *Räuber- und Ritterroman*, a popular adventure-story genre.

If Aschenbrenner's tale was in the epic mode, the tale of Gesche Rudolph was cast in the mode of tragedy. Coming down to us in the form of a plea by her lawyer, it is an artfully constructed plea for mercy, a literary creation designed to move the reader and to melt an official's heart. Is such "fiction in the archives" (to borrow Natalie Zemon Davis's phrase) trustworthy as historical evidence? There is, maintains Evans, perhaps too confidently, no reason to doubt the truth of those details which it does recount; what we cannot know is what it omits.

And what of the confidence trickster and bigamist Ernst, whose life we possess courtesy of the pen of the hapless policemen charged to question him? As Ernst wove his elaborate web of fantasies and falsehoods, and the police were forced to go to ever greater lengths to tease out the facts, it became apparent that even he could no longer tell reality from fiction. In such ways the underworld was intruding disturbingly—and also comically—into respectable society, since the criminal succeeded in passing as a model of correctness.

After the epic, the tragic, and the comic, Evans presents the ironic. The descent of a decent woman into prostitution, disease, and death casts a critical light on the moral pretensions of the respectable society that first banished her by its own rigid conventions and then exploited her. Thymian Gotteball's diary, while masquerading as a true-life story, was not that at all. It was a social-realist novel, drawing heavily upon literary stereotypes of innocence betrayed and corrupted by hypocritical society. Its fictional status has long been known. Evans's trick of initially presenting it as if it were authentic appears to be evidence that he has assimilated more of the rhetorical devices of postmodernism than one might have supposed.

Thus Evans's case studies reveal a striking conflation of rhetoric and reality, fact and fiction, as the public forged the bogey figures that it needed to vilify. It is almost the very unreliability of the narratives told by, or on behalf of, Evans's protagonists that establishes their true social identity: his heroes were, indeed, untrustworthy sorts. It would appear that the new historicism, and even a postmodernist notion or two, apparently kicked out through the door of *In Defense of History*, have come back through the window of *Tales from the German Underworld*. If this hints at a certain dissonance between the two works, this must be seen not as a blemish, but rather as a sign of creative tension in a scholar at the peak of his powers caught in the act of extending his range.

ROY PORTER is the author of *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity* (Norton).

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 5*

nations to shelter their social arrangements from the occasionally disruptive forces of trade.

Money for nothing

To the editors:

Peter Diamond offers a spirited defense of the benefits of private capital investment but pooh-poohs the idea of allowing American workers to invest a portion of their own taxes ("Sound Investment," November 9). Instead, he says, let the federal government do it.

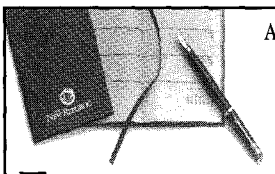
But there are risks of centralized investment, primarily that the government would become involved in picking corporate winners and losers. Investing in a stock index fund does not eliminate the problem—the choice of an index is itself a decision to favor some companies over others. And the risk is even greater given the amount of money at stake. Although Diamond does not divulge any numbers, one leading proposal offered last year by former Social Security Commissioner Robert Ball estimates a government investment of $1 trillion (in constant 1996 dollars) in the stock market by 2015. That's enough, according to New York University economist Lawrence White, for the government to become the largest shareholder of many if not most of 500 of the largest companies in America—those listed in the S&P 500.

CAROLYN WEAVER
American Enterprise Institute
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

Peter Diamond is off the mark to compare government investments of portions of the Social Security trust fund in the stock market to the Thrift Savings Plan. The TSP is a defined contribution program with individually owned accounts. Workers have a property right in their accounts, which is not true of Social Security. Furthermore, the TSP is a voluntary program. If workers are dissatisfied with it, they can refuse to participate. This gives fund managers an incentive to maximize returns. By contrast, a government-invested Social Security system would be mandatory, and workers would be forced to continue contributing 12.4 percent of their income into the system no matter how dissatisfied they were.

MICHAEL TANNER
Cato Institute
Washington, D.C.



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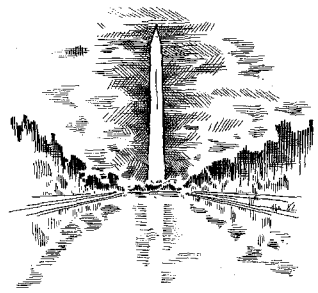
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Show people

MY FATHER'S FIRST JOB IN SHOW business was as an assistant to the hypnotist MacKnight, who, like most hypnotists, lacked a first name. I'd like to have called him the "great hypnotist MacKnight" or the "famed hypnotist MacKnight," but I don't think he was either. In 1918, he had been a haberdasher in Omaha—not young, not handsome—and by 1919, the year my father met him, he had become "the man who knows." He knew one thing, certainly. He knew my father was ready to leave the speck of a town he lived in and that he was charming enough to coax his girlfriend, Peggy, to come along. Peggy was 17 and she could play the piano, which made her an asset for any traveling show. But she was also the daughter of the local banker, and after a few months he came after her and hustled her back to Brainard, Nebraska—and that, so far as my father ever knew, was the end of Peggy's career on the stage. I wonder if she ever told her children about it, if she took the memory out now and then and shook it gently like a little snow globe.

MY FATHER DID NOT PLAY THE piano, and he couldn't actually do any sleight of hand, though he'd told MacKnight he could. So his role—and he must have been good at it, because he later reprised it with another magician, a man who called himself Mock Sad Alli—was to lie between two chairs while his magician-boss broke rocks on his chest with a small mallet. The idea was that a deep hypnotic state had rendered him impervious to all pain. My father said that, if you are suspended in air, your body gives with the blows, and it isn't so bad. Anyway, by then, he knew he wanted to be an actor, and he regarded his duty to dazzle an audience with the utmost seriousness.

WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, I TOOK almost no interest in the stories my father told from this phase of his career. They seemed so antiquated, herky-jerky, sepia-toned. If you have a father who is much older than all the other fathers—mine was 60 when I was born—the idea of the distance he has come to get to you is faintly disturbing. All parents have pasts that precede and exclude their children, but an older parent has many pasts, world upon world of remote and peculiar experiences. It was only a few years ago, just before my father died, that I started asking for his stories about the traveling shows, and then I couldn't get enough of them. I liked to hear the names of the plays—*Ole and his Sweetheart, The Cowboy and the Thief, Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*—that traveling companies would put on in those days, followed by an act like Mock Sad Alli's ("$500 reward to any person who can prove the above act is not the most wonderful, scientific, mystifying performance of its kind in America"), followed by, let's say, "'The Imp's Playground'—A Spectacle on Unsupported Ladders!" or "Olsen and Johnson—Likeable Lads Loaded with Laughs," or maybe a dance by Tootsie, a ringleted gamine in a poofy dress and ankle boots. ("Cheer up! Tootsie is coming," reads the playbill in my father's 1919 scrapbook. "Direct from eighteen months engagement at Camp Pike, Little Rock, Arkansas!") A play was the same as a spectacle on unsupported ladders was the same as a Corn Belt Isadora Duncan trailing gossamer scarves across the stage. Entertainment was entertainment, and, in the small, snow-bound towns of the Midwest, how like a miracle it must have seemed.



I LIKE TO THINK OF THE LIVES braided together in those little traveling companies, which were in many ways closed communities. Some people's families shunned them when they ran away to join a show; some hotels refused to take actors. Some people married one another or had one another's babies or broke one another's hearts. On the long train rides between the little towns—Hamburg, Iowa; Enid, Oklahoma; Salina, Kansas—some of the entertainers played cards and some of them murmured bits of dialogue like a prayer and some of them took gulps from pocket rockets and stared out at miles of white and desolate prairie.

MY FATHER'S MOTHER DIED AT 18, of what was then called childbed fever, shortly after she gave birth to him. Her name was Pearl, and she had been the youngest daughter of a fierce, illiterate Irishwoman who doted on her. The Irishwoman—my father's grandmother—could not abide the idea of Pearl's little boy being raised by Pearl's husband, a man who, as she saw it, had lured Pearl to her death. So she kidnapped my father from his father, a barber and aspiring vaudevillian, brought him home to Brainard, where she ran a hotel for traveling salesmen, and raised him herself. Periodically, she would open a little velvet-lined box and show my father a lock of Pearl's pale gold hair. If he failed to cry—which at first he often did for, after all, he had never known his mother—she would whip him. After a while, he learned to simulate grief-stricken tears. He told me this story once, and with utter matter-of-factness, so it was years before I thought what a diabolically perfect preparation this was for an acting career. He did not seem to resent his grandmother, and she, as it turned out, was deeply proud of him. Years later, when he had achieved a modest success as a film actor in 1930s Hollywood, she took the train out from Nebraska to see him. Each day of her visit, while he labored at the studio kissing Carole Lombard or slugging Humphrey Bogart, she would station herself on a bench outside a theater on Sunset where one of his movies was playing. And she would stay there till blue dusk stained the Hollywood Hills—a shapeless figure in rusty black silk and a sagging hat, a visitor from a much harsher climate, pointing out her grandson's picture to every passerby.

WE DON'T HAVE MANY HUMBLE, noncorporate, non-theme-park entertainments anymore. And maybe it's not too self-indulgently nostalgic to say that there is something about them to miss. A few weeks ago, my husband and I were driving through southern Pennsylvania with our two-year-old son when we saw a sign for a roadside attraction called "The Land of Little Horses." We had to travel quite a distance from the main highway and then down a long gravel road, but when we got there we were just in time for the circus act featuring tiny ponies in headdresses and a baby-faced, teenage master of ceremonies in tattered spangles. This was not a smooth and seamless spectacle—at least half of the tricks didn't come off—but our son loved it anyway. And there was something about the earnestness with which the performers created their cheesy, small-scale wonderment, and the knowledge that they were not trying to sell you some spin-off product, that reminded me of my dad and his tent shows. For a moment, on the drive home, I could almost hear a November wind howling across a Nebraska snow field, and the tinkly ragtime music that could nearly drown it out.

MARGARET TALBOT

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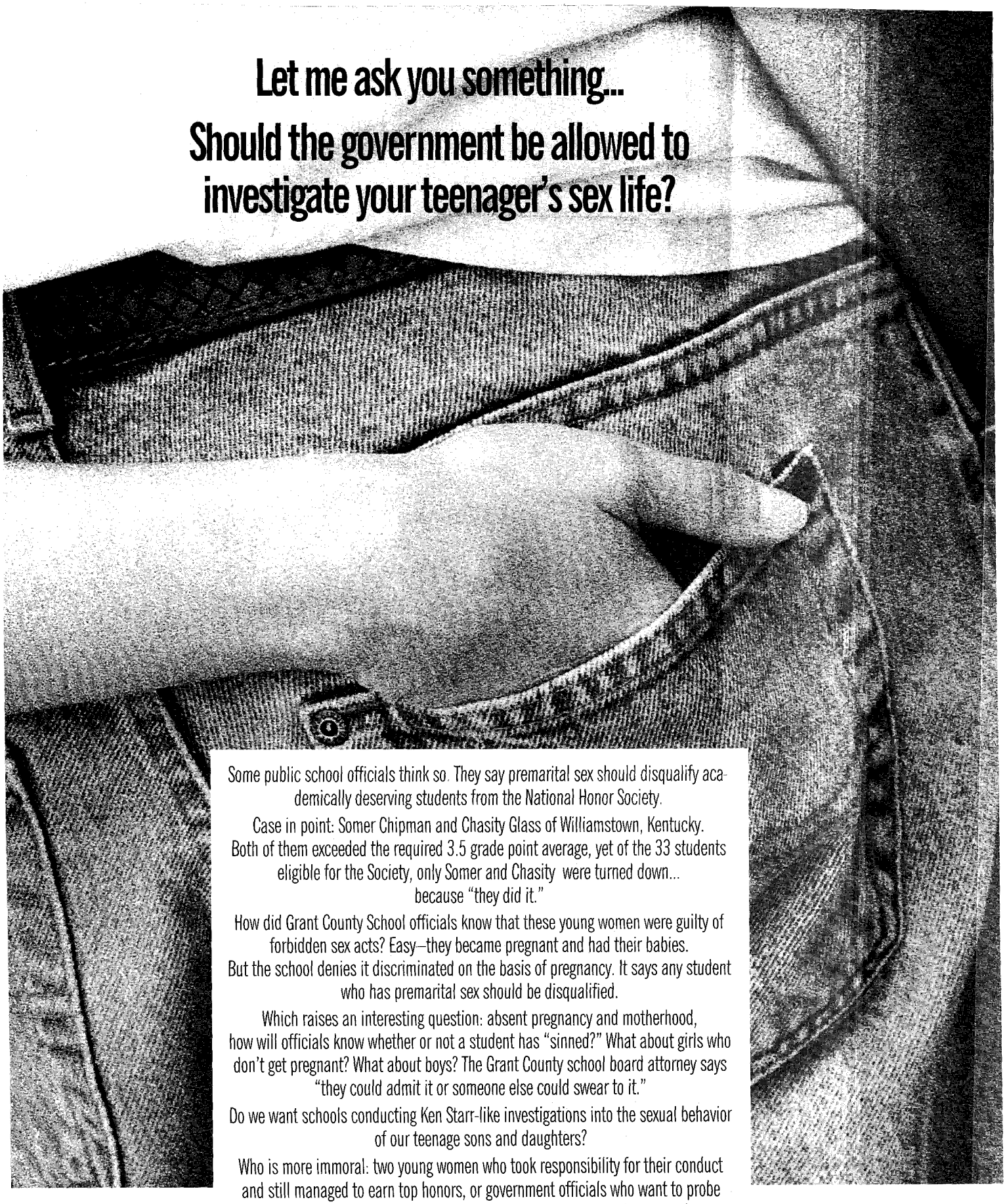
Let me ask you something...

Should the government be allowed to investigate your teenager's sex life?



Some public school officials think so. They say premarital sex should disqualify academically deserving students from the National Honor Society.

Case in point: Somer Chipman and Chasity Glass of Williamstown, Kentucky. Both of them exceeded the required 3.5 grade point average, yet of the 33 students eligible for the Society, only Somer and Chasity were turned down... because "they did it."

How did Grant County School officials know that these young women were guilty of forbidden sex acts? Easy—they became pregnant and had their babies. But the school denies it discriminated on the basis of pregnancy. It says any student who has premarital sex should be disqualified.

Which raises an interesting question: absent pregnancy and motherhood, how will officials know whether or not a student has "sinned?" What about girls who don't get pregnant? What about boys? The Grant County school board attorney says "they could admit it or someone else could swear to it."

Do we want schools conducting Ken Starr-like investigations into the sexual behavior of our teenage sons and daughters?

Who is more immoral: two young women who took responsibility for their conduct and still managed to earn top honors, or government officials who want to probe into students' private behavior and deny them the honors they earned through hard work?

Think about it.

Ira Glasser
Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union
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